CRISIS AND CHANGE:

ECONOMIC CRISIS AND TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE BETWEEN THE WORLD WARS, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO CHRISTCHURCH, 1926-36

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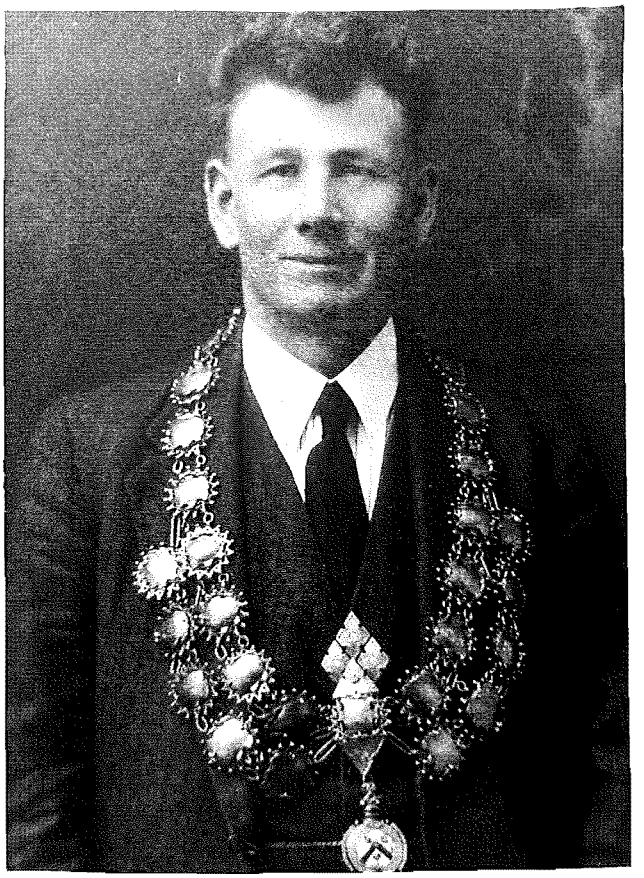

Daniel Giles Sullivan (1882-1949), Mayor of Christchurch, 1931-36; MP for Avon, 1919-47; Minister of Railways, 1935-41; Minister of Industries and Commerce, 1935-47; acting-Prime Minister on a number of occasions - the first New Zealand-born Labour MP to fill that post. A loyal and tireless worker for his native city and for New Zealand's secondary industries. An ambitious politician, but one who sought to bridge rather than to exploit the deep class divisions of Christchurch.

(Official City Council photograph, 1933.)

ABSTRACT

In the period between the World Wars the developed world experienced immense technological changes, based primarily on electricity and oil, and a severe economic crisis. The two are in fact strongly interrelated. Unfortunately the depression has tended to overshadow the effects of the "Second Industrial Revolution" in the historiography of New Zealand. Yet an examination of several areas of economic, social and political development, concentrating on the city of Christchurch, reveals that technological change was frequently exerting a very powerful influence either in the same direction, or contrary to that of the depression.

The decline in the comparative economic status of Christchurch and Canterbury in this period owes at least as much to the way in which new technology permitted the exploitation of resources and markets elsewhere as it does to the effects of the economic crisis. Similarly, there was a strong undercurrent of technological unemployment locally and nationally, which would have necessitated changes in social welfare and employment policies even without the depression. The massive unemployment caused by that crisis compelled central government to make permanent provision for the unemployed. However, the provision of relief work rapidly developed into the extension of the welfare state on a very wide front in order to reduce the numbers of unemployed. Meanwhile the opportunities for paid employment for women were being extended by technological change at least as much as by the depression. New technology was also

reducing the burden of their domestic work.

Forms of entertainment based on innovations such as radio, motion pictures and motor vehicles competed strongly with more traditional recreations, while the greater personal mobility encouraged the growth of existing forms of entertainment such as dancing, golf and informal social contacts. Arguably, this competition had a deeper effect on formal sports than the depression.

The impact of new technology coincided with those of the Great War and climatic variations to give the false impression that the depression had led to an improvement in health. In reality, it produced a significant deterioration in several areas, particularly those of psychological illness and preventive treatment. On the other hand, a reduction in alcohol-related disorders, and the horrendous road toll which motor technology had created, must be weighed in the balance.

New technology also posed immense new problems for local government. Roads had to be remade, electricity networks installed, vast amounts of new machinery purchased, and new permanent staff employed, particularly in salaried positions. Such expenditure limited the financial and political capacity of local government to support meaningful relief work during the depression. This was particularly true of Christchurch, where a majority of ratepayers were working people. The Labour-dominated City Council restricted spending to keep their support but could not match the rate-cutting promises of the Citizens' Association or satisfy many of the unemployed. Consequently, the most strongly Labour city rejected the party in local government at a time

when it was sweeping to power in the country as a whole. Despite Christchurch's reputation for peacefulness during the depression there was significant disorder in the city - on a scale certainly exceeding that in Dunedin, and possibly that in Wellington. At least two persons died as a result of violence associated with industrial unrest. Nevertheless, Christchurch was not on the verge of a revolution: the balance of force was too uneven and had been tipped further in favour of the authorities by motor transport.

Finally, technological change was rapidly shifting dominance from the capitalist to the professional class. The depression seemed to reinforce this existing movement in favour of "the rule of the expert" by demonstrating the limits of capitalism and sharply dividing the capitalist class and its supporters. Amongst the dominated classes, new technology was moving the weight of numbers, income and prestige away from the independent working class and towards the white collar class. It did this by de-skilling many occupations and encouraging the growth of large-scale public and private enterprises. The labouring class and much of the independent working class tended to coalesce into a semi-skilled working class.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The production of this thesis owes much to the assistance of others. My thanks must go firstly to my supervisor, Dr Len Richardson, for his remarkable patience with a project which became very prolonged and which changed shape so drastically. I am also grateful to Dr Brent Layton for reading a draft of my first three chapters and suggesting a number of very necessary alterations. Any economic howlers that remain are, of course, entirely my own work. Other persons that were particularly helpful in suggesting new avenues of inquiry include Richard Greenaway of the Canterbury Public Library who never became discouraged at my using only a fraction of the sources he cited; and Dr Stevan Eldred-Grigg who demonstrated that disagreement can be at least as productive of ideas as the expression of identical views. My mother, Mrs. I.E. Watson, also deserves credit for attempting to answer mysterious questions about people and places in the Christchurch of her youth.

Many people have done much to smooth that rough final stretch of road to presentation. In particular, Mrs. Glenys Lamb, who typed most of the script in frequently trying circumstances, and Mrs. Brenda Carter who undertook part of the task at short notice. My special thanks must go to Jan McKenzie who spent much time and effort reproducing the graphs and to Paul Cook who drew them. My sister, Mrs. Jennifer Gough, also gave considerable assistance, particularly with the photocopying.

However, above all I acknowledge the unfailing assistance of my wife Judy, without whose moral and material support this work would never have been completed.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AJHR	Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives
CDB	Christchurch Drainage Board
CIA	Canterbury Industrial Association
CSO	Census and Statistics Office
CTB	Christchurch Tramway Board
CUC	Christchurch Unemployment Committee
GLU	Canterbury General Labourers' Union
MED	Municipal Electricity Department of the Christchurch City Council
NZPD	New Zealand Parliamentary Debates
NZYB	New Zealand Official Yearbook
Press	The Press, Christchurch
PWD	Public Works Department
Star	The Christchurch Star
Star-Sun	The Christchurch Star-Sun
Sun	The Sun, Christchurch
TEU	Tramway Employees Union
UFC	United Front against Capitalism
WEA	Workers' Educational Association

INTRODUCTION

Two themes may be said to dominate the economic and social historiography of the interwar period in the western world. They are the rapid adoption of new technology on a large scale and the prolonged and deep international depression. British historians have been frequently fascinated by this combination, particularly in the way in which it was revealed in regional contrasts within their own country. The broad division between the fast-developing new technology areas of south-eastern England and the stagnant older industries of the North-east and Wales has been a constant theme of their work, as it was a major concern of contemporaries. In the United States the popular division has seemed to be chronological - rapid technological change during the "roaring 'twenties" versus stagnation in the depressed 'thirties. The writings of New Zealand and Australian historians have tended to be more dominated by the effects of the depression, followed in the case of New Zealand by a rapid modernisation under the Labour government.[1] The 'twenties have generally been dealt with as a rather pale imitation of the American experience, but with the emphasis on insecurity. One Australian writer has gone so far as to describe the new technology as "the shadow" and

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1. There is, however, a school text-book containing a remarkably detailed description of technological change in New Zealand during the 'twenties: R. Chapman and E. Malone, New Zealand in the 'Twenties; Social Change and Material Progress, Auckland, 1969. A lively, well-illustrated Australian study also devotes much space to changing technology: B. Carroll, Between the Wars, Sydney, 1980.

depression as "the substance" of the 'twenties, let alone the 'thirties.[2]

This study sets out to examine the impacts of technological change and the international economic crisis in a decade which encompassed the worst of the depression in New Zealand. It is particularly concerned with the interaction between the two influences.

To this end, the two chapters of Part I define the forces of new technology and the depression, and relate them to New Zealand. Chapter One also examines why technological change was so rapid and widespread between the wars. Such change was profound, and not limited just to "the motor car, radio, and talkie-pictures".[3] An economic historian has plenty of material with which to argue that

> while the rate of technical progress is difficult to measure, it seems safe to say that in the inter-war years the consumer was offered more new products and the industrialist more new machines and materials, than at any comparable period in history.[4]

The emphasis in Chapter Two is on the links between the new technology and the development of the depression itself. It also stresses the failure of New Zealand's decision-makers to introduce policies which might have reduced the disruptive effects of the international crisis internally, a failure which unnecessarily increased the suffering in an urban centre like Christchurch.

Part II goes on to trace the impact of the forces identified in Part I on various areas of economic, social and

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2. R. Broomhill, Unemployed Workers, St. Lucia, 1978, p.1-2.

3. Ibid., p.2.

4. S. Pollard, The Development of the British Economy, 1914-50, London, 1962, p.93.

political life in Christchurch. Chapter Three investigates the reasons why Christchurch and Canterbury underwent a particularly severe economic decline and slow recovery between 1926 and 1936. Chapter Four deals with the changing patterns of employment as well as the problem of large-scale unemployment during this period. There is then a chapter devoted to the ways in which new technology and the depression were together altering patterns of recreation. The chapter on health seeks to explain the apparent paradox of improving public health statistics in a community hard-hit by economic depression. Aspects of politics are explored in the next two chapters. The first describes the policies adopted by the Christchurch City Council, the only large municipal authority dominated by the Labour Party throughout most of the depression years. Chapter eight examines Christchurch's reputation as the most peaceful of the main centres during the depression. It also assesses the significance of the outbursts that did occur. The final chapter looks at how both technological change and the depression affected the balance between social classes. Rather than a two-class division into bourgeoisie and working class, or "rich and poor", this thesis uses throughout a fivefold categorisation based on the correlation between economic functions and interests, and social values. The classes described are labelled as capitalist, professional, white-collar, independent working-class and unskilled working-class.

The terminal years of this study, 1926 and 1936, are intended to act as boundary markers rather than enclosing walls; they are not allowed to obscure the view forward or

back. These years were originally chosen partly for convenience, marking either end of an intercensal period which government economies during the depression had lengthened to ten years from the normal five. Given the inevitable lack of precision as to the depression's "beginning" and its "end", it appeared reasonable to cast the net wide in the certainty of capturing at least the worst of the crisis years. Above all, it seems likely that the full impact of technological change in particular is normally only felt some time after its adoption becomes widespread. It would thus be distorting to examine for example the effects of such technological change in 1926 without mentioning the rapid spread of factory electrification in the early 'twenties.

Nor has the geographical scope of this study been limited strictly to the Christchurch Urban Area, or even to New Zealand itself. After all, the origins of most of the technological changes lay overseas. Furthermore, there were many important statistical series which were compiled on a national basis and not divided according to urban areas. Where local figures exist, they are given. It should be noted, however, that such figures frequently refer to Christchurch City or have been compiled by adding together returns from the city and suburban authorities. The boundaries of those authorities did not match those of the urban area. Yet the use of a local point of focus has its advantages, permitting a closer examination of a number of aspects, particularly the actions of local authorities. Furthermore, there are special attractions in focussing on Christchurch, a city which has been frequently singled out for the alleged uniqueness of its depression experience.

PART I

CHAPTER ONE

TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE

Technological advance, the increase in the capacity of humanity to alter its environment,[1] has been a constant feature of life in the western world for several hundred years. This process underwent a considerable acceleration during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, a development so dramatic in its social as well as economic implications that it has been justly termed the Industrial Revolution.[2] Towards the end of the nineteenth century and early in the twentieth there was a renewed speeding up of the pace of significant technological change. This "cluster of innovations"[3] has in turn been described as a "Second Industrial Revolution"[4] because of its profound effects both on modes of production and social life.

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1. E.Mansfield, The Economics of Technological Change, New York, 1968, p.10-11, gives a more detailed definition.

2. Leading social historians have few qualms about this term: "...although the concept of an industrial revolution has been queried by certain recent economic historians, during these years the beginnings of a total change in English society can be traced, to which the label 'revolution' still deserves to be attached". A.Briggs, The Age of Improvement, 1783-1867, London, 1959, p.17. See also D. Landes, The Unbound Prometheus, Cambridge, 1969, Ch.2; and H. Perkin, The Structured Crowd, Brighton, 1981, p.28. One economic historian has captured the process with an effective if mixed metaphor: "There is an everlasting stream of invention, but the stream runs sometimes more strongly, sometimes less, and particularly there is bunching in the widespread application of new techniques". R.Sayers, A History of Economic Change in England, 1880-1939, London, 1967, p.28.

3. Landes, op.cit., p.4, 235.

4. Ibid, loc.cit.; and A.Musson, The Growth of British Industry, London, 1978, Ch.16.

The new wave of industrial change was to a very large extent based on the use of electricity and oil fuels, much as its predecessor had rested heavily on steam engines and coal. There was, however, a considerable overlap. For example, coal-gas powered the prototypes of the internal combustion engine, only later to be driven by fuels derived from oil. More importantly, coal-heated steam was and still remains the prime mover for a large proportion of the world's electricity. Even such apparently old-fashioned devices as steam boilers and gasworks improved their efficiency significantly up to the 'thirties, albeit with the help of alloys containing elements extracted by electricity. The development of molybdenum steel, for instance, permitted a sixfold increase in boiler pressure after 1911.[5] Largely due to such innovations, the amount of coal required to produce a kilowatt hour of electricity in the United States fell from approximately 3.2 lb. in 1913 to 1.3 lb. in 1928.[6] The use of superheaters in steam locomotives - simply passing the steam through the fire-box again - greatly improved their efficiency at the same time.[7] There were also important areas of advance in this wave of change which might well have proceeded without the new forms of energy, notably the development of synthetic materials such as bakelite and rayon. Nevertheless, electricity or oil were to be found at the basis of most of the technical innovations adopted during this period.

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5. C. Goodeve, "Iron and Steel", in P. Dunsheath (Ed.), A Century of Technology, 1851-1951, London, 1951, p.28.

6. L. Mumford, Technics and Civilisation, London, 1947, p.235.

7. There were a number of other developments which also contributed to large increases in "tractive effort". E.Williams, "Rail and Water Transport", in M. Kranzberg and C.Pursell, Technology in Western Civilisation: Vol.2, Technology in the Twentieth Century, New York, 1967, p.137-9.

Much of the theoretical and experimental work for the new technology had been carried out by 1900, but its wider application was generally delayed until after 1918. Then amenities such as the motor car, electric lighting, and radio spread rapidly and ceased to be regarded as the curiosities of the rich or eccentric. Simultaneously commercial production witnessed a great acceleration in the replacement of steam, gas, animal and human energy by electricity and oil fuels. Total world production of electricity increased approximately fourfold between 1920 and 1939,[8] and the production of crude oil grew roughly threefold over the same period.[9]

There were a large number of reasons for the rapid diffusion of new technology between the wars. The Great War itself contributed greatly by speeding the development of some technical innovations, showing the value of scientific research, encouraging mass production, creating a large number of surplus motor vehicles, and acting simultaneously as a show-case and a testing-ground for much new technology. In some cases, civilians serving in armed forces acquired new skills such as lorry-driving and many may well have come to appreciate the value of motor transport to their own businesses.

At a more fundamental level, the attractions of the new electrical and oil technology can be divided usefully, if somewhat arbitrarily, into two broad categories: the advantages it offered those who provided goods and services, and

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8. Landes, op.cit., p.431.

9. G. Jenkins, Oil Economists' Handbook, London, 1977, p.85.

the manner in which it met the social demands which industrialisation was creating.

One of the greatest attractions of the new technology to business and public authorities was the prospect of a substantial saving on labour. Although the industrialist might have to pay electricians at comparatively high wage-rates, the machines they serviced more than made up for this by displacing large numbers of unskilled labourers. In particular, electricity demanded no labour for delivering coal, trimming, stoking, removing clinker or cleaning boilers. Yet it could also be used to simplify many operations. Many more single machines appeared with the capacity to perform a series of tasks either automatically or with the minimum of resetting. This was largely because electric power could be switched from one process, plane, speed or direction to another far more readily than power transferred by line-shaft. As a result, factory-owners were able to employ women, youths, and adult male workers with non-industrial backgrounds in jobs which had previously been the preserve of higher-paid, skilled men.

In building and construction, electric and oil motors similarly provided power sources for a variety of machine-tools, including cranes, pneymatic drills, saw-benches, welders and cement-mixers. The latter two were especially important because of the growing use of reinforced concrete in building, an innovation which itself displaced large numbers of bricklayers and stonemasons, along with many of the labourers who had assisted them. Lorries increasingly replaced more labour-intensive forms of transport on road-works and other major construction projects, working alongside tractors drawing implements such as graders and bitumen

sprayers. Graders, bulldozers and carry-alls driven by their own engines appeared around 1930. Over most of the western world the interwar period saw the pick and shovel, wheelbarrows, horse-scoops and drays, steam-shovels and steam-rollers largely replaced by much less labour-intensive machinery powered by oil. Internal-combustion engines were also used to power cement-mixers and pneumatic drills on public works.

The labour-saving technology of the second wave of industrialisation spilled over into agriculture, as had that of the first. It contributed greatly to the substantial increase in agricultural production in developed countries between the wars, an increase achieved with the employment of a decreasing proportion of the work-force. Output per man-hour in agriculture increased by 56% in the United States between 1909-11 and 1939-41. In Britain, where mechanisation was less widespread, the increase was 38% between 1904-10 and 1937.[10] Electricity and the internal combustion engine were often to be found in competition in pastoral farming as both could supply power for farm butter churns, cream separators, and milking and shearing machines. Electric motors also found uses in the small-scale processing of some crops on farms - in chaff-cutting and threshing, for instance. In Europe electricity was even used for drawing ploughs. However, the internal combustion engine had the greater effect on arable farming between the wars, mainly through the use of the tractor. This machine was vastly improved

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10. S. Clough, The Economic Development of Western Civilisation, New York, 1959, p.421.

during the 'twenties and early 'thirties with the adoption of caterpillar tracks, large pneumatic tyres, power take-offs and triangular configuration.[11] Specialist motorised harvesters began to gain popularity during the 'twenties, particularly in the United States and there were 61,000 combines in use there by the end of the decade.[12] Tractors and stationary oil-fueled engines were increasingly used for threshing, and other forms of on-farm processing. From less than a hundred thousand in 1919 the number of tractors in use in North America grew to over a million in 1930 and almost 1.6 million in 1939. In Europe the comparable figure was negligible at the time of the Great War but 130,000 by 1930 and over 270,000 in 1939.[13] The motor-lorry also proved a great labour-saver on many farms, both for bringing in the harvest and for carrying produce to factory, rail-head or market. There were 139,000 such vehicles on United States farms in 1920; 890,000 in 1935.[14]

This benefit extended throughout the road transport industries to the extent that motor lorries, taxis and buses replaced horse-drawn and steam-powered vehicles. The same had earlier applied to the electric tram and the underground railway, a service almost universally driven by electricity. Electric, and later diesel, locomotives saved some rail services the labour costs associated with stoking, cleaning and watering steam engines.

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11. R. Wik, "Mechanization of the American Farm", in Kranzberg and Pursell, op.cit., p.360-1.

12. N. Rosenberg, Technology and American Economic Growth, New York, 1972, p.135.

13. Clough, op.cit., p.428.

14. Rosenberg, op.cit., p.135.

A dramatic saving on labour was also rendered possible by the application of new technology to water-borne transport. In 1914 2.6% of ships were oil-burning; in the mid-'twenties over a quarter.[15] Such ships required approximately a tenth of the number of stokers to be found on coal-burners.[16] There was also a considerable growth in the number of ships powered by internal combustion engines between the wars, a method of propulsion requiring even less labour. By 1939 roughly a quarter of the world's ocean-going tonnage was driven in this way.[17] Between them, oil-burners and motor ships accounted for 53% of such tonnage in 1938 compared with 18% in 1918.[18] Whether on ships, or in ports, rail-yards or loading-bays, electricity and oil-power increasingly saved labour by providing motorised cranes, winches and conveyor belts. These replaced steam-engines, horses and, above all, manpower.

Labour-saving new technology was less evident in commerce during this period. Nevertheless, electrical adding-machines and cash-registers began to appear, while the long-established telephone and telegraph were further automated. Teleprinters entered use, and the number of telephone connections grew significantly. However, it was the typewriter which brought about the most profound changes, particularly in the employment of women. Few typewriters were electrically powered during the interwar period, but dictaphones were widely used.

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15. Sayers, op.cit., p.96.
16. W. Johnson, "Transport", in Dunsheath, op.cit., p.248.
17. Sayers, op.cit., p.96.
18. D. Aldcroft, British Transport since 1914, Newton Abbot, 1975, p.64.

Furthermore, electrically-purified elements improved the wearing quality of type-metal, now being subjected to heavier use. Within the retail industry the van and the light lorry largely ousted the horse-drawn cart for heavy or distant deliveries.

Electricity also reduced a substantial amount of the manual labour in homes, a traditionally unpaid or lowly paid area. Its impact should not be exaggerated, however, in the face of other changes in technology. In Britain, for example, the home tended to remain -

> A machine heated by coal, coke and gas, and powered by women...For most families the reduction in labour made possible by stainless cutlery and ready-made clothes, the reduction in family size through birth control, and the rehousing schemes bringing with them inside lavatories, fixed baths and running water - if they were lucky, running hot water supplied by gas or coal - were of much wider significance than the electrical revolution.[19]

Nevertheless, by 1939 the majority of British homes enjoyed electric lighting,[20] a form of illumination which necessitated less cleaning and servicing than gas, kerosene or candle. Moreover, the production of stainless steel and cheaper factory-made clothing owed much to the use of electric power in industry. In countries where domestic electricity proved more competitive than in Britain, electric vacuum cleaners, water-heaters, cookers and radiators were more successful in reducing the work of the housewife or lessening the need to employ full-time servants.[21] By the mid-'thirties electric refrigerators and washing machines were making some impact,

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19. L. Hannah, Electricity Before Nationalisation, London, 1979, p.208.

20. Ibid., loc.cit.

21. Landes, op.cit., p.439-40.

particularly in the United States. Even in Britain the electric iron was very widely used, and hundreds of thousands of middle-class households were enjoying the labour-saving advantages of electricity.[22]

The attraction of this labour-saving aspect of so much of the new technology was enhanced for employers, including domestic employers, by the fact that wages had generally risen more than interest rates since 1914. Throughout the developed world pay-rates had tended to rise in pursuit of prices during the Great War and the short-lived post-war boom. Even when prices fell during the early 'twenties, attempts to reduce wages met strong and partially effective resistance from organised labour.[23] Trade unionism had been growing in power before 1914 as the reserve army of unorganised and low-paid rural labour shrank, as literacy increased and as workers gained experience of their strength in the industrial setting. Wartime inflation had then further swelled the support for trade unions by providing the economic conditions in which they could best demonstrate their value to workers. In Britain, for example, average wage rates increased by 96% between 1914 and 1923. In 1921 the average had been up 190% on 1914 and in 1928 it was still 94% up.[24] In comparison, the mean annual Bank Rate was 4.15% between 1922 and 1932, as against 3.75% between 1904 and 1913.[25] This represented an

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22. Hannah, op.cit., p.193-208.

23. G. Routh, Occupation and Pay in Great Britain, 1906-79, London, 1980, p.107, 114; D.Aldcroft, The Inter-war Economy: Britain, 1919-39, London, 1970, p. 361-62; P.Renshaw, The General Strike, London, 1975, p.94-5.

24. Routh, op.cit., p.134.

25. Aldcroft, Inter-war Economy..., p.333.

average increase of less than eleven per cent. The situation in the United States and other technically advanced nations appears to have been broadly similar, with rises in wage-rates outstripping those in interest-rates.[26] This tended to make investment in labour-saving technology more attractive. Furthermore, in Britain at least, the unskilled and those employed in coalmining, gasworks, shipping and railways were amongst the most successful in advancing their wage rates and in slowing reductions.[27] These were precisely the areas on which the old technology depended so heavily.

Versatility was a strong feature of the new technology which helped employers to take advantage of its labour-saving potential and therefore encouraged its purchase. Speaking of the use of electric motors by ship-builders, C.H. Merz, a pioneer electrical entrepreneur, claimed that

> the really important point about adopting electricity was that it made available for their operations a much more easily adaptable form of power; so much did this prove the case that within a very few years the different firms we connected up to the system were spending two or three times as much on electric power as they had ever spent on steam power - not because electric power was more expensive, but because they had applied it to so many uses for which, before, they had not used power at all.[28]

Electric power could simultaneously supply heat for welders, high-speed turning for drills and grinders, intense illumination over large areas and power for a variety of tools. Part

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26. E. Phelps Brown and M. Browne, A Century of Pay: The Course of Pay and Production in France, Germany, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States, 1860-1960, London, 1968, p.106, 432-52; M.Friedman and A.Schwartz, A Monetary History of the United States, Princeton, 1963, p.640.

27. Routh, op.cit., p.124.

28. Quoted in Hannah, op.cit., p.18.

of this versatility derived from the nature of the electrical form of energy with its ready conversion into heat, light or power. Part also came from the fact that electricity could be supplied down flexible cables rather than inflexible shafts or gaspipes. Above all, however, there was the capacity for electric power to be "fractionated" - readily divided up into a number of smaller units.

Within factories, the flexibility of electricity permitted an escape from the line-shaft and its associated wheels and belts. Although many industrialists initially persevered with this type of transmission after electrification, the use of electric motors at individual machines gradually became standard. This allowed far greater freedom in factory layout and speeded the introduction of flow methods of production, particularly in engineering. For example, the mechanical movement of materials, was now much easier in the absence of "the jungle of shafts and belts"[29] which had marked the steam-powered factory. Furthermore, an additional power take-off did not necessitate another network of wheels and belts, and significant increases in output could be achieved without the expense of a new boiler or larger underground gaspipes. Electricity was therefore particularly attractive to small entrepreneurs, as both the capital and labour costs of beginning machine production were considerably reduced without limiting the potential for substantial further growth.

Flexibility was also a major aspect of the appeal of motor transport. On long hauls, carrying heavy tonnages, the railway maintained its economic edge. But it lacked the

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29. Landes, op.cit., p.288.

capacity to deliver to retail outlets or the factories which electricity had set free from dependence on coal. The motor-lorry also had the advantage of serving farming districts, permitting the collection or delivery of relatively small quantities of goods at the gate. To some degree the lorry was able to benefit from the popularity of its prolific cousin, the motor-car. Authorities were pressed to provide better roads for the one and the other soon followed. From a relatively insignificant level in 1913, the estimated number of ton-miles travelled by motor lorries in the United States rose to 48.5 thousand million in 1940.[30] In Britain it was estimated that road hauliers were carrying a hundred million tons by 1936, compared with virtually nil in 1913, and as against 281 million tons on the railways.[31] The electric lorry also had some effect, especially on deliveries in urban areas.

Between them, electric power and the motor-lorry made the location of many industries more flexible. It was now not so important to establish a factory on land handy to a railway line or a canal which could bring coal in and provide rapid transport out for products. It had also become more economic to site component factories away from the site of assembly. Likewise, greater automation and less dependence on established industrial regions around coalfields allowed entrepreneurs to take advantage of less skilled labour and lower-wage regions. For example, the shift in the American

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30. Clough, op.cit., p.425.

31. Aldcroft, Inter-war Economy..., p.218.

textile industry between the wars from the north-east to the south has been traced partly to the simpler operation of the new electrical automatic warp-tying machines.[32]

Greater flexibility of location brought many savings, including the opportunity to purchase cheaper land further afield. A similar saving in land costs can be seen in agriculture as rapid lorry transport to market or railhead permitted the exploitation for horticulture of pockets of good soil and favourable climate which had previously been too isolated. Within cities, electric trams, buses and the motor-car enabled residential areas to be located on cheaper land in much the same way. In many cases, transport and industrial firms were able to reduce their holdings of land which had previously been used to feed the horses. The paper-mill at Mataura furnishes a New Zealand example of this development.[33]

A substantial element in the versatility of electrical and motor technology was the saving it offered on the weight and volume of fuel and engine. In the transport industries such a saving also meant a reduction in energy usage and an increase in the proportion of payload to deadweight. Steam locomotives needed to carry much larger quantities of fuel and water than vehicles driven by internal-combustion engines. This was partly because water was needed to carry the power as steam, partly because the heat-value of coal by weight was roughly a third lower than that of diesel oil, and partly

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32. L. Fishel, "The Problem of Social Control", in Kranzberg and Pursell, op.cit., p.500.

33. J. Angus, Papermaking Pioneers, Mataura, 1976, p.104.

because even the most efficient steam-turbine utilised a lower proportion of the energy in its fuel than an internal-combustion engine. Boilers, fire-boxes and a platform for the stoker all added to the heaviness of the mobile steam-engine. It has been estimated that for some railway operations, such as shunting, a ton of diesel fuel could save up to seven tons of coal.[34] The mains-powered electric tram, trolley-bus or train was even more attractive, carrying no fuel dead-weight at all. However, this advantage had to be off-set against the substantial cost of installing many miles of wire and the loss of freedom of movement. Horses were more manoeuvrable but their power out-put was much lower. Moreover, the bulkiness of their "fuel", straw for bedding and removal of dung posed considerable problems in metropolitan areas. The advent of caterpillar tracks and the "pneumatic-tyred revolution"[35] during the 'twenties and 'thirties helped oil-fueled motors to take over from horse-power and manpower even on much soft or steep ground. Similar considerations operated in the case of the construction industries. Small-horsepower electric and diesel motors could be transported, with their fuel, much more readily than steam-engines and this encouraged their use on more and smaller jobs. Comparative lightness was also an attraction in agriculture, where the smallest steam-engine was likely to be too clumsy, and probably disproportionately powerful, for many tasks around the farm which could be mechanised by electrical or oil-fueled

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34. P. Odell, An Economic Geography of Oil, London, 1963, p.70-71.

35. Andrews and Beaven Ltd. 100 years, 1878-1978, Christchurch, 1978, p.10.

motors. Finally, it was in large part the reduced volume and weight of fuel which promoted the adoption of oil-burning steam-engines and then diesel motors in ships. Diesels carried only half the weight of fuel as oil-burners and a third that of coal-burners, and they required no boiler-room.[36]

Reduced weight of fuel and engine was not the only reason why electricity and oil were more efficient in their use of fuel. Internal combustion engines extracted more of the potential energy than their external-combustion competitors. At its most efficient, the steam engine extracted around a fifth of the energy in its fuel, gas engines used around a quarter and diesel motors took out about a quarter in the case of small units to over a third for large ones. Electricity had to rest on its other advantages, as even in 1940 in the United States it utilised only a fifth of the energy theoretically available at power-stations.[37] However, in the case of hydro-electricity, the "fuel" was extremely cheap.

Where the supply of current was largely dependent on thermal power-stations a conversion to electricity in effect allowed the consumer to utilise economies of scale. One vast steam-turbine could supply power to numerous factories at a cheaper rate than they could produce it themselves, even allowing for losses in transmission. Further, large savings could be effected within the workplace because it was possible to have electric motors consuming energy only when actually

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36. Aldcroft, British Transport, p.64.

37. Landes, op.cit., p.434.

doing productive work. In this the "fractionalisation" capacity of electric power assisted greatly. Similarly, the use of line-shafts and belts had entailed considerable losses of power and the amount of energy used up by a steam-engine could not be lowered quickly to meet a drop in demand for power. In addition, neither oil-engines nor electric motors required a long period of stoking up in which large amounts of energy were lost.

The capacity to deliver power instantly to a machine draws attention to another major advantage of the new technology - the saving on time which it offered. The importance of increased speed could be seen in areas as diverse as road transport, harvesting, food-processing, communications and shipping. It permitted savings in some costs - such as insurance on freight - and increased output at the same cost in the case of expenditure on buildings and much plant. As the number and size of multi-storey buildings grew, lorries reduced the danger of total congestion in central-city areas by speeding the delivery of materials onto sites and the removal of spoil. The rapidity of motor transport also allowed bitumen and concrete to be delivered from central plants in greater quantities and over a much wider area.

In some areas - emphatically not that of road transport[38] - increased safety was another advantage of the new technology.

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38. The death-rate from motor vehicle accidents in the United States per standardised hundred thousand population per year increased from seven between 1913 and 1917 to 26.4 between 1928 and 1932. United States Bureau of the Census (USBC), Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970, Part 2, Washington, 1975, p.719.

For example, the removal of line-shafts and drive-belts took away a frequent cause of accidents. Even where a factory-owner was not greatly concerned for the health of his employees, such accidents held up production, attracted the attention of the authorities and could lead to court action and higher insurance premiums. The dangers of poisoning or explosion from leakages of gas were also reduced by the changeover to electricity. Enlightened employers appreciated the improvement in safety and concentration which accompanied the reduction in noise-levels with electric power. In underground mines electricity provided a safe and efficient alternative to compressed air for the introduction of drills, railways and conveyor belts. To a large extent as a result of this, the proportion of British coal production cut by machine increased from 8% to 61% between 1913 and 1939. Over the same period the proportion conveyed by machine rose from 1.5% to 54%.[39] Electricity presented similar attractions in the construction of tunnels and their use by railways.

Electricity also introduced into general use a large number of new materials and processes. These in turn brought advantages such as savings on labour, lightness and versatility, along with other special properties.

Plentiful supplies of cheaper electric current led to the use of electrolysis on an industrial scale, most notably in the production of aluminium and magnesium. The availability of cheaper aluminium not only introduced cheap non-corrosive kitchen utensils, it also rendered economic the large-scale

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39. Aldcroft, Inter-war Economy..., p.153.

extraction of metals such as chromium, molybdenum, vanadium, manganese, and titanium by the thermite process. These elements in turn provided important new alloys. Chromium, for example, was an essential component of stainless steel, discovered in 1913 and soon a major saver of labour in the home through its use in cutlery. Because of its resistance to corrosion by acid, this alloy also rapidly replaced more expensive metals in chemical and food-processing industries. Electroplating with nickel, and later chromium, was used even more widely for protection from corrosion. With the addition of other elements, chromium produced stellite, and chrome-tungsten steel, alloys which retained their hardness at high temperatures. These discoveries were timely as electric power increased the cutting speeds of drills and lathes tenfold between 1875 and 1915.[40] Without new materials the resulting gain in efficiency would have been greatly reduced. Electrolysis also supplied elements with a high degree of purity. Such very pure zinc was necessary for pressure die-castings, which found increasing use in the production of motor cars and home appliances. High-purity electrolytic copper was similarly important for electric wires and contacts. On a larger scale, electrolysis largely superseded previous methods of producing chlorine and augmented the manufacture of caustic soda. The former was used in the development of new bleaches, the latter in soaps, papermaking, and the viscose method of making yarn.

The electric arc furnace was equally productive of new materials. The most important of these, calcium carbide,

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40. "Alloys", in Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol.2, London, 1929, p.551.

led to the production of acetylene. Thus electricity was essential to the three main forms of welding developed by the 'twenties; thermit, electric arc, and oxy-acetylene. Other derivatives of calcium carbide had "opened the way for the transition from inorganic to organic chemistry"[41] were as vital to the acetate process of manufacturing rayon. Electric furnaces also provided carborundum for grinding and refractory surfaces, chrome steel from chromite, silicon for highly conductive alloys, phosphorous for cheaper matches, graphite to improve lubricating oil, and carbon disulphide for dry-cleaning. In addition, the furnace permitted the recycling of scrap in areas without an iron and steel industry.

Electricity also contributed significantly to the production of artificial nitrogen fertiliser, partly through the electric arc process in countries well-endowed with hydro-electricity but mainly through the manufacture of alloys needed for the high-pressure vessels employed in the Haber process. Along with the replacement of crops previously grown for horse fodder and the fall in population growth, such fertilisers gave the lie to pre-war suggestions of an impending food crisis in the western world.

The advantages presented by electrical and oil technology would almost certainly have promoted its gradual diffusion, even at 1914 price-levels. However, the attraction of these innovations was greatly enhanced between the wars by the strong tendency for both their capital and fuel costs to fall, particularly in comparison with their competitors. This fall must be seen against a background of wartime inflation

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41. E.Farber, "Man Makes His Materials", in Kranzberg and Pursell, op.cit., p.184.

which was unequalled in living memory in most countries. A form of technology that could actually reduce its pre-war costs was an attractive exception. The fall in price was particularly evident in the case of electricity. In Britain the average cost of a unit of electricity dropped from 2.07d in 1923 to 1.00d in 1938.[42] In the United States the average charge in cents per kilowatt-hour on all services dropped from 2.83 in 1922 to 2.46 in 1935 and 2.06 in 1940.[43] It had been 2.70 in 1907. World crude oil prices showed a less favourable trend, soaring to $US3.07 a barrel in 1920 from $US0.95 in 1913. By 1930 the price was down to $US1.19 and in 1935 it touched $US0.97. Petrol prices, on the other hand, showed an absolute as well as a real decline from pre-war levels. In Britain the average retail price of a gallon of petrol fell from 8.8d. in 1914 to 7.5d. in 1930, with a slight rise to 7.9d. in 1938.[44] This was despite a rise in tax from 1.3d. to 3.6d. a gallon between 1914 and 1938. In comparison the total British retail price index was almost a quarter higher in 1938 than it had been in 1914. More significantly, the price of coal was roughly 21% higher in Britain and 50% higher in the United States.[45] In 1925, it was possible to buy 41 Kwh of electricity at industrial rates in Britain for the price of a ton of coal. By 1938 162 Kwh could be purchased for the by then much lower cost of that ton.[46]

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42. Aldcroft, Inter-war Economy...., p.192-3.

43. USBC, op.cit., p.827.

44. Jenkins, op.cit., p.133.

45. B.Mitchell and P.Deane, Abstract of British Historical Statistics, Cambridge, 1962, p.483-4; USBC, op.cit., p.214.

46. Landes, op.cit., p.434.

Declines in the average ex-factory prices of motor vehicles was also striking. In Britain this figure fell from £308 in 1912 to £259 in 1924, £206 in 1930 and £130 in 1935-36.[47] Even more dramatic was the fall in the ex-factory price of the Model T Ford, from £1000 in 1908 to £300 in 1924.[48] Such reductions in prices were also reflected in the cost of parts, so that in Britain the estimated total costs per hundred miles of private motoring (excluding depreciation) dropped from around 31/4d. to 22/- between 1928 and 1938.[49] In the United States the index of prices for motor vehicles and equipment dropped by over a quarter between 1926 and 1936.[50] Electrical appliances also showed a rapid decrease in price. Perhaps most dramatic was the fall in the average cost of running a thirty candle-power bulb for eight hours in Britain - from £10 in 1900 to 7/- in the mid-'thirties.[51] Similarly, the cost of installing a small household lighting system fell from £11-20 in 1919 to £7-8 in the late 'twenties and £5-6 in the mid-'thirties.

Economies of scale due to growing sales were certainly an important aspect of this dramatic improvement in the price-competitiveness of electrical and oil-fueled technology. However, there were a number of other factors operating, particularly the application of new technical methods.

This was very evident in the electrical supply industry. There was a rapid increase in the size of generating stations

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47. Aldcroft, Inter-war Economy..., p.184.

48. Landes, op.cit., p.442.

49. Aldcroft, Inter-war Economy..., p.184.

50. USBC, op.cit., p.199.

51. Hannah, op.cit., p.187.

following the discovery of alternating current and the development of long-distance, high-voltage power cables in the late nineteenth century. These innovations made it possible to supply much larger numbers of consumers, if necessary from a remote power-station.[52] The development of high-speed turbines at around the same time provided the generating capacity. Initially this was largely limited to hydro-stations such as Niagara Falls, opened in 1886 and extended repeatedly. Despite the high cost of construction, especially where dams had to be built, hydro-generation was extremely cheap. But most developed countries were obliged to depend on thermal generation and the size of their power-stations only grew rapidly after 1900, when improved alloys permitted higher boiler pressures and turbine capacity. As these improvements were adopted, extensive grids could be constructed. These were supplied from vast power-stations on coalfields, or near ports to which the large quantities of fuel necessary could be transported economically. From around 25,000 Kw in 1910, the size of the largest thermal stations reached a plateau of 208,000 Kw in 1930, a level not exceeded until 1956. Between 1908 and the early 'thirties the maximum voltage of transmission lines and the distance they carried power roughly doubled.[53]

Oil fuels were also greatly reduced in price by the application of new techniques. The development of the rotary hydraulic drill led to a doubling of maximum well-depth between 1900 and 1925,[54] while new alloys improved the strength of

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52. T.Williams, A Short History of Twentieth Century Technology, c.1900-c.1950, Oxford, 1982, p.64.

53. B.Netschert, "Developing the Energy Inheritance", in Kranzberg and Pursell, op.cit., p.249.

54. Ibid., p.242.

drilling equipment. In addition, motorised transport assisted in its own provisioning by providing transport in oil-bearing regions at the periphery of western exploration in the Middle East, Latin America, and South-East Asia. Aircraft also began to make a contribution to surveying while welding and electric pumps permitted the economic transportation of vast quantities of crude oil by pipeline from remote areas. Simultaneously, the application of thermal "cracking" to oil-refining after 1913 greatly reduced the unit cost of petrol. Thermal cracker efficiency was gradually improved throughout the 'twenties, with the result that the quantity of petrol which could be derived from a gallon of crude oil doubled between 1919 and 1935.[55] After 1924 that petrol was increasingly converted to "premium-grade" spirit with the addition of tetra-ethyl lead. This led to greater energy efficiency through higher consumption ratios. Between 1927 and 1936 the average ratio in American cars went from 4.55 to 6.15.[56] At the same time, the further development of the diesel motor and its application to road transport from the late 'twenties onwards permitted the efficient use of a much cheaper oil-fuel.

Mass production was the most famous of the techniques used to reduce the cost of motor and electric equipment. Its two basic elements, the precise standardisation of components and the assembly-line, were already well-established in some

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55. C.Russell, "Petroleum", in Open University, The New Chemical Industries, Milton Keynes, 1970, p.89.

56. W.Hamilton, The Dairy Industry in New Zealand, Wellington, 1944, p.39.

branches of American industry by 1900.[57] However, while the former element was quickly adapted to automobile production in the United States, the assembly-line appears to have been introduced to engineering only in 1913, by Henry Ford. By 1920 it was saving up to ninety per cent of the time previously required to construct a motor car.[58] The demands created by the Great War, and the need to compete with American producers hastened the spread of mass production methods to other countries. By the mid-'twenties British car manufacturers were emulating and sometimes even improving on American techniques.[59] Assembly-lines also proved useful in the production of electrical appliances, which generally consisted of a number of small standardised components. Similar continuous flow methods were increasingly applied to bulkier forms of production, including heavy chemicals, oil-refining, papermaking, glass-making, and sheet-metal rolling. Electricity was well-suited to provide the many sources of power on demand that mechanised assembly-lines and other flow methods required.

Some non-technical factors were important, however, in explaining why so much of the benefit of falling costs was passed on to the consumer rather than being absorbed in higher wages or royalties. The increasing employment of women and the unskilled - often immigrants in the United States - at wages they could not get elsewhere probably helped to achieve

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57. P. Drucker, "Technological Trends in the Twentieth Century" in Kranzberg and Pursell, op.cit., p.19.

58. J. Bright, "The Development of Automation", in ibid., p.648-50.

59. Ibid., loc.cit.

a comparatively docile workforce. The decentralisation of factories which electric power made possible probably also assisted by enabling the entrepreneur to shift to areas where unions were weak and wages low. Certainly the coal-mining tradition of harsh conditions and industrial confrontation had no real counterpart amongst the white-collar and skilled employees of the prosperous new electrical supply industry. They were therefore not mobilised to extract the greatest possible share of the income being won over from the ailing coal industry. Similarly, workers in the underdeveloped oil-producing regions of the world which were opened up between the wars had little organised bargaining power. Their governments tended to be authoritarian and liable to side with the oil companies against rebellious employees who wanted higher wages. Furthermore, such governments were frequently unstable and susceptible to undue influence in granting concessions and setting prices. In several cases - as in the Dutch East Indies - the oilfields were under colonial administration. Part of the benefit accruing to employers in the new technology from their advantageous bargaining positions with workers and native peoples was passed on in lower prices to consumers.

Most of these consumers were to be found in the developed world, where much of the new technology proved particularly well-suited to meet the demands which the whole process of industrialisation was creating.

The First Industrial Revolution took much of the world off the historic cycle of demographic crisis and slow recovery by making the necessities of life more readily available.

Railways and steamships transported food and bulky raw materials over considerable distances within Europe and eastern North America, permitting specialisation and encouraging the development of local resources. They had also facilitated the colonisation of "new" lands by providing settlers with outward transport, initial supplies of industrial goods, and military support against native resistance. They had then provided reliable links to the metropolitan markets, permitting specialisation and exploitation on an international scale. Further vast quantities of food and raw materials such as wool and cotton flowed back from these colonies in the Americas and Australasia, and from local populations in Asia, and Americas, and Africa. Meanwhile, the powering of pumping and hauling machinery in mines, steam's first major task, was helping to provide cheap fuel to households as well as industry. In factories steam-engines produced massive horsepower, and both used heat and engendered it. These features made it particularly suitable for large-scale industries such as iron and steel making, heavy engineering, pipe and brick kilns, heavy chemicals, textile factories, and flour mills. Thus the first wave of industrialisation was supplying more and better food, clothing, shelter, heating, water supply, and sanitation.

By the final quarter of the nineteenth century industrialisation had conquered the worst excesses of hunger, exposure, and disease in Europe, North America, and the European colonies. Simultaneously, it had also begun to create in those areas a large market for less basic goods. Estimates vary, but it seems likely that in Britain real wages increased in the order of two-thirds to eighty per cent between 1850

and 1900.[60] Between 1860 and 1900 the increase in real incomes per occupied person appears to have been around 75% in Germany and 90% in Sweden. Real wages in France went up by about 65% over the same period.[61] There was also some decrease in working hours, which allowed more time and energy for recreation, shopping and enjoying new consumer goods. Estimates of the length of working week appear to have fallen between 1870 and 1914 from a fairly general 72 hours to 60 hours in France, Germany and Sweden, 53 hours in Britain, and 52 hours in the United States.[62]

Agricultural wages and hours lagged behind almost everywhere, but agriculture employed a shrinking proportion of the workforce.[63] Conversely, an increasing proportion of that workforce was to be found in salaried occupations, helping to deputise for large employers and keeping the accounts which had swelled with the development of industrial organisation and the increased volume of goods traded. The disposable incomes of many households were also rising due to the decline in the birthrate in the industrialised world. This decline has been associated with a vast array of factors linked to industrialisation. These include the higher net cost of dependents in urban areas, growing social ambitions in a rapidly developing economy, the availability of industrial consumer goods as alternative avenues of expenditure, the money incomes that factory work offered to women, increased knowledge of

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60. The lower estimate is favoured by Landes, op.cit., p.242. P. Deane and W. Cole, British Economic Growth, 1688-1959, Cambridge, 1967, p.25, gives the higher figure.

61. Phelps Brown, and Browne, op.cit., p.432-452.

62. Ibid., p.206-212.

63. Ibid., p.63, 66.

philosophy and birth-control due to greater literacy and the development of wider urban pools of ideas, and the increased use of industrially-produced birth-control devices.[64]

Industrialisation had created "a market of high consumption, a body of consumers able and willing to buy above the line of necessity".[65] Within this process, women and children appear to have exerted greater influence on the choice of purchases, perhaps partly because families were getting smaller.[66] The whole trend towards wider discretionary spending formed the basis for what has been termed, inevitably, a "retailing revolution".[67] This involved the provision of lower-priced, standardised goods and services to a mass market which was largely concentrated in urban areas. It was based on the principle enunciated by Thomas Lipton, one of its most successful adherents, that "the poor man's 20s is as good as the rich man's £1".[68] Lipton's career exemplified other aspects of the continuing "industrial-commercial revolution".[69] These included the build-up of chain stores - enormously facilitated by the railway and the

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64. N.Tranter, Population and Industrialisation, London, 1973, p.28-29.

65. Landes, op.cit., p.243.

66. Ibid., loc.cit.

67. P.Mathias, Retailing Revolution: A History of Multiple Retailing in the Food Trades based upon the Allied Suppliers Group of Companies, London, 1967. D.Davis, A History of Shopping, London, 1966, Ch.13, talks of the same broad development as "The Second Retailing Revolution". The later application of similar principles to the retail clothing industry has been referred to as "a Merchandising Revolution" in G.Rees appropriately titled hagiography St. Michael: A History of Marks and Spencers, London, 1969, p.109.

68. Quoted in J. Camplin, The Rise of the Plutocrats, London, 1978, p.75.

69. C. Wilson, Economic History and the Historian, London, 1969, p.189.

telegraph - and the use of flamboyant advertising. Department stores appeared, as did hire-purchase.[70] Overall, rising wages and falling prices for food and clothing were enabling a growing proportion of the population to spend on new experiences; a little luxury, a bit more ornamentation, some new form of stimulation.

The forms of production which flourished in these conditions were not necessarily dependent on electricity or oil fuels. New luxury foods appeared and the old ones became more accessible. Working people could now consume roller-ground white flour, white bread, sugar, bought biscuits, sweets, cocoa products, tinned foods, baking powder, condensed milk, more tea and coffee, butter, eggs, and red meat. Groceries turned from meagre accumulations of local produce, located in a private house, to specialist institutions housing shelves of tins, cardboard boxes, paper bags, and cellophane packets. The tobacco industry expanded enormously, especially through the production of "tailor-made" cigarettes as women increasingly adopted the habit with their new money incomes, and as cheap safety matches reduced the cost and trouble of lighting up. There was a similarly rapid rise in the sale of products designed to improve appearance rather than just maintain health. The development and production of new dyes became a major industry. Likewise, natural

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70. Whilst maintaining that "the bourgeoisie more than the working classes were the chief beneficiaries of the revolution in marketing before the First World War", the historian of one strongly "bourgeois" Paris department store admits that "mass retailing gave way to stores expressly directed at a lower-class clientele". M.Miller, The Bon Marché: Bourgeois Culture and the Department Store, 1869-1920, Princeton, 198k, p.165. He also notes that "there grew up a whole subculture of department stores that specialised in credit sales for the working-class trade" (p.178).

sources of ornamental buttons and jewellery failed to keep pace with increasing demand, and the nascent plastics industry. Later, shiny, lightweight rayon began to replace natural fabrics for dresses and stockings. Fine soaps displaced the coarse and home-made varieties, with Pears and Palmolive promising softer skin while Lifebuoy rescued white collar workers from the social and financial disasters attendant on "B.O." Soap powders, developed in the 1890s, claimed to improve the hands and demeanour of the housewife. Toothbrushes, toothpastes, and dentures were similarly promoted as improving appearance, along with shavers and cosmetics.

Recreational industries also burgeoned. The latter half of the nineteenth century was the heyday of the music-hall and the travelling circus, and it saw the beginning of the rise of the commercial dance-hall. Popular sports such as soccer, cycling, trotting, and baseball began to attract several thousand spectators regularly. For the more active, the bicycle provided a passport to greater individual freedom and mobility. Increasingly the camera went with the cyclist or with the excursionists to the new popular seaside resorts close to big cities. Back home, the holiday photographs were likely to stand on a piano or a cabinet full of cheap editions of classics or popular novels.

The commercial drive to separate the mass consumer from his discretionary cash combined with technological change to spawn new forms of retailing. These included national chains of shops, department stores, mail-order businesses, the use of hire-purchase and above all, advertising.

The new mass circulation newspapers provided the main platform for the modern sales pitch while themselves moving to meet the mass market. The explosive growth of the popular press in the late nineteenth century was probably at least partly the result of mass formal education.[71] This was itself the product of the demand for more literate, numerate and disciplined recruits for industry and the military, combined with some disquiet in the dominant classes at the supposed social and moral ill-effects of industrialisation and urbanisation. At the same time, the price of newsprint and printing was being substantially reduced by the development of cheaper methods of producing caustic soda, faster presses and improved access to vast sources of woodpulp in Scandanavia and North America. Railways helped to reduce unit costs by not only bringing the pulp and paper in, but carrying the finished product out to larger regional and national markets. Urbanisation also assisted by providing a substantial local base which was cheaper to supply. However, the growth of advertising was probably the most important, single factor in the falling cost of newspapers to the public because it supplied the pounds which reduced the price by pennies. Now many more people could afford to experience regularly the sensations which came from reading about the latest murders, rapes, fires, floods, and frauds. The village gossip of a lifetime could be crammed into a few

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71. The significance of this factor in the rise of the popular press is disputed in the case of Britain in Perkin, op.cit., p.47-50. However, depth of literacy must be taken into account, and the ability to write one's name is not the same thing as reading a newspaper.

issues. Hearst and Harmsworth joined the Levers, Cadburys, Nestles, Liptons, Woolworths, Wills, Eastmans, and Sears as powerful magnates and household names in the new consumer society.

Electricity and oil fuels might not have played a vital role in the initial rise of this new society, but they fitted into it magnificently and helped to maintain the momentum of its growth. At the simplest level, they continued to lift standards of living by increasing the efficiency of most forms of production. In particular they improved the production and distribution of consumer goods. Electricity mechanised the intricate processes and provided many of the materials for packaging, tinning, and tubing products ranging from biscuits to toothpaste. Likewise, motor transport ensured that such products reached every country store or corner grocery, if necessary in a refrigerated form. The number of chains of shops in the United States increased from 94 in 1900 to 720 in 1914 and 2726 in 1928. Amongst the industries - and sectors of retailing most strongly affected by electrification were "ready-to-wear" clothing and furniture.[72]

Furthermore, the new technology provided more of the new choices, experiences and excitements that the discretionary spender was seeking. The gramophone was an early example of this, bringing the popular music and dancing of special occasions and commercial halls into the home. In 1909 345,000 gramophones were produced in the United States, 514,000 in 1914 and 2.2 million in 1919.[73] Although this

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72. USBC, op.cit., p.847.

73. Ibid., p.696.

mechanism did not require mains current initially - its success would have been greatly retarded otherwise - the production of large quantities of cheap records relied on electrolysis for the creation of master copies. The 'twenties saw a great improvement in sound quality with the development of electrical recording, and electrical reproduction followed in the early 'thirties.[74]

By that time the industry was struggling to compete with a new electrical wonder of the age in the form of radio. This provided the latest music comparatively cheaply, along with sports commentaries and recent news. It supplied a link to developments locally and far away, and also reassurance in a time of change through the broadcasts of "personalities" who were often "parsonalities". Over thirteen million sets were built in the United States alone between 1920 and 1930.[75] In Britain 125,000 broadcasting receiver licences were issued in 1923, three million in 1930 and over eight million in 1938.[76] The motion picture was another form of electrical entertainment which was well-established before the 'twenties. However, its popularity continued to grow and received a new boost from the advent of the "talkies" in 1927. There was even colour, of a type, by 1930. The local cinema provided laughter, excitement, titillation and an escape from the anxieties of real life for millions of people. The average weekly attendance at motion pictures in the United States increased from forty million in 1922 to

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74. Williams, op.cit., p.319-22.

75. F.Spencer, A History of the World in the Twentieth Century, Part II: 1918-45, London, 1967, p.29.

76. B.Mitchell and H.Jones, Second Abstract of British Historical Statistics, Cambridge, 1971, p.114.

ninety million in 1930.[77] One study in Cardiff during the 'thirties indicated that 52% of unemployed youths attended the cinema at least once a week.[78]

The motor car and the motor cycle were also used primarily as a source of recreation by city-dwellers. They allowed flexible weekly outings and holiday trips without sharing a compartment with strangers. At the same time these vehicles could supply a sense of speed and power which left the bicycle far behind. By 1929 the United States and Europe were producing between them over five million cars annually, compared with around half a million in 1914.[79] The number of automobiles registered in the United States increased from 1.6 million in 1914 to 21.3 million in 1929 and 25.2 million in 1938.[80] The growth in registrations in Britain was less spectacular but still massive - from 132,000 in 1914 to almost two million in 1938. The number of motor cycles in use in that country approached three-quarters of a million around 1930 but then dropped away.[81]

Other aspects of the new technology had similar effects. The electric light extended the time available for reading or entertaining. It also appears to have introduced greater colour into ordinary homes. One historian of the British electrical supply industry maintains that "it is not too much to say that the electric light revolutionised interior domestic decoration, as lighter and brighter paintwork and wall-coverings

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77. USBC, op.cit., p.400.

78. C.L. Mowat, Britain Between the Wars, 1918-39, London, 1955, p.485.

79. Spencer, op.cit., p.34.

80. USBC, op.cit., p.716.

81. Mitchell and Jones, op.cit., p.230.

were used with no danger of their being soiled by gaslight vapour".[82] Along with other labour-saving devices and ready-to-wear clothing, it left more time and energy for recreation. That a housewife's work often seemed to take as long does not vitiate the change; by the mid-'thirties the average housewife had a larger house, more possessions, and less daughters to help her. Moreover, more time to listen to the radio, to read one of the new women's magazines, to window shop at bright new department stores, to travel to the central city in the tram or bus, or even to daydream, represented a new freedom of choice.

Several features of the popular electrical and oil-fueled innovations simply continued the trends laid down by so many growth industries in the late nineteenth century. They provided a greater sense of freedom, especially personal freedom, and new sensations. They were designed for a mass market and, with the exception of the motor car, became available to all classes between the wars. Furthermore, their appeal tended to be directed as much at women and even children as to menfolk. Romance always played a greater part in motion pictures than organised sport - except in brief newsreels; the radio brought popular entertainment more to the workplace of most women than the workplaces of men; and the motor car was clearly a vehicle designed for more than one.

The methods of selling the new diversions also continued the trends of the late nineteenth century. Department and multiple stores flourished. Advertising expenditure increased

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82. Hannah, op.cit., p.187.

from around $542 million in 1900 to $3,262 million in 1928.[83] The amount of consumer credit outstanding increased from $2.6 billion in 1919 to $7.1 billion in 1929 and $8.3 billion in 1940.[84] In 1929 an estimated two-thirds of car purchases and half those of home appliances were being financed in this way in the United States.[85] Above all, the mass market for the new technology was upheld by further, if slower, growth in real wages and in leisure time provided by the continued spread of industrialisation - both of the first and second wave. Even at the depths of the depression, in 1932, real incomes were still higher than in 1913 in the United States, Britain, Germany, Sweden and France. For most of the 'twenties and 'thirties they were ten to twenty per cent higher.[86] There was also a further drop in the average working week. Between 1905 and 1930-31 the number of hours in France, Germany and Sweden dropped from 60 to 48. Those worked in Britain fell from 54 to 48 and those in the United States from 52 to 49.[87]

Like the First Industrial Revolution before it, the Second increased the discretionary consumer market. Furthermore, in its cultivation of new sensations and its provision of wider choice, the new technology pointed the way to the electronic and sexual revolutions which lay ahead.

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83. USBC, op.cit., p.856.

84. Ibid., p.989.

85. T.Marburg, "The Social Effects of Mass Production", in Kranzberg and Pursell, op.cit., p.90.

86. Phelps Brown and Browne, op.cit., p.432-52.

87. Ibid., p.209.

The spread of electrical and oil-fueled technology was particularly rapid in New Zealand during the interwar period. Between 1921 and 1938 the amount of electricity sold rose by over 560% while the tonnage of oil landed increased by almost 630%.[88] In both cases there was a large element of catching up.

As late as 1926 per capita consumption of electricity was still only approximately that of Britain, and well behind that of the United States.[89] Before the main part of the Lake Coleridge power station came into operation between 1914 and 1924, most urban electricity had been produced using coal, gas, or oil as prime movers. This current was expensive largely because its fuel had to be purchased.[90] The relatively small size of New Zealand's cities, their isolation from each other, and their distance from the main coalfields also contributed to the high changes. However, the price of current fell rapidly and consumption boomed with the expansion of hydro-generation in the late 'twenties and 'thirties. During this period new stations were opened at Arapuni (1929), Waikaremoana (1929) and Waitaki (1934) while existing works were extended at Monowai (1926) and Lake Coleridge (1930).[91]

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88. Electricity sold: CSO, Industrial Manufacture, 1921, p.41; NZYB, 1939, p.792. Imports of benzine, benzoline, crude petroleum, crude residual oil, kerosene, and motor spirit: CSO, Trade and Shipping, 1921, 1938.

89. British consumption of electricity per capita in 1926 was 118 units, that of the United States 500 units. Most advanced nations fell between these figures. Aldcroft, op.cit., p.191. In New Zealand, electricity sold in 1925-26 divided by the 1926 census population yields 115 units per capita.

90. Average charge per unit of electricity generated: Gas 4.42d., Oil 3.74d., Steam 2.13d., Hydro 1.97d., AJHR, 1926, D1, p.110-112.

91. For details of generating capacities, see N.M. Speer, The Electricity Supply Industry in New Zealand, Wellington, 1962, Ch.5.

Similarly, consumption of petroleum per capital was comparatively low for a developed country in 1921. At ten gallons per capita, usage of motor spirit was approximately a quarter of that in the United States.[92] The amount of liquid petroleum products imported was somewhat lower per capita than the amount imported into Britain in the same year.[93] By 1938, however, New Zealand imports of motor spirit had reached 64 gallons per capita, almost half the United States figure, and roughly fifty per cent higher than the rate of importation of all refined petroleum products into Britain.[94]

The new technology was well suited to the dominion's often rugged topography. Steep hills and swift rivers provided abundant potential for the generation of hydro-electricity. At the same time they made the construction of railways difficult and expensive, thus favouring the development of roading and motor transport. Similarly, the comparative lack of railways militated against the transport of coal in favour of the more weight-efficient liquid fuels.

The nature of New Zealand's European economic development assisted this trend. It was based from the outset on the production of food and raw materials to meet the demands created by the Industrial Revolution on the other side of the world. Consequently the main areas of settlement had developed where conditions were favourable to the production

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92. Calculated from figures in USBC, op.cit., p. 10 , 716; CSO, op.cit., loc.cit.; and NZYB, 1928, p.81.

93. Calculated from figures in Mitchell and Jones, op.cit., p.75, and Mitchell and Deane, op.cit., p.10.

94. Ibid; Mitchell and Deane, op.cit., loc.cit.; USBC, op.cit., loc.cit.; CSO, op.cit. 1938; and NZYB, 1939, p.58.

of farm exports, and the major towns had evolved at or near the ports. In most cases these towns proved to be far from the country's best coalfields. Furthermore, a scattered farming population could not make the most economic use of railways or coal. Yet farmers formed a substantial sector of the population and enjoyed a disproportionate degree of political influence due to their economic importance and the country electoral quota. They were, moreover, thoroughly capitalist rather than subsistence producers. They demanded good outlets to market and generally desired as many of the advantages of urban life as possible. Pressure on politicians to improve rural communications continued to bring the construction of uneconomic rail-lines during the interwar period. By then, however, the deputations to ministers increasingly sought better roads and extended electricity supply lines. The extension of the well-established New Zealand tradition of state aid to development pushed electricity distribution and good roads far out into the country. Electric Power Boards were established in rural areas with government assistance from 1919. In the United States, where government was less active in electrical generation and supply, only one in ten farms had electricity in 1935.[95] A year later a survey of New Zealand dairy-farming families indicated that eighty per cent of them had electric lighting.[96] Similarly, the Main Highways Board distributed central government taxation to local bodies, principally counties, to meet the cost of strengthening

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95. Wik, op.cit., p.366.

96. Hamilton, op.cit., p.127.

roads to withstand motor traffic.[97]

However, it had been urban pressure that had initially brought the government into the sphere of electricity generation. During the late nineteenth century mining and manufacturing had been fostered in New Zealand by its distance from the industrialised world, and the need to harvest, transport, and process farm exports. Such industries increased the need for skilled and white collar workers and allowed a class of manufacturing and retail employers to develop. Together these urban groups pushed for improvements to city life such as clean water supplies, prohibition, improved sanitation, and better roads. In this they mirrored the municipal reform movements operating in Britain and the United States. Certainly there was considerable interest in such movements amongst local reformers.[98] By the early years of the twentieth century, municipal electricity supplies were becoming widespread overseas, but it was evident that the expense of thermal and mechanical generation was holding development back locally. Therefore urban interests, led by T.E. Taylor, a Christchurch businessman and radical politician, pushed for the state to provide the vast initial investment in hydro-power. In 1910 the Liberal Government accepted this role through the Development of Waterpower Act. The Lake Coleridge power station was the posthumous first fruit of Taylor's efforts. By 1936 £13 million out of £33 million invested in the electrical supply

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97. In 1929-30 the Main Highways Board spent over £2 million on road construction and maintenance. AJHR, 1930, D1, p.171.

98. N.Macleod, The Fighting Man: A Study of the Life and Times of T.E. Taylor, Christchurch, 1964, p.30, 50, 60-61.

industry in New Zealand and had been directly provided by central government.[99]

The result of this investment can be seen in the sharp fall in the average cost of electricity in the dominion (Table 1.1). The cost of imported oil fuels also fell

TABLE 1.1: ENERGY PRICES 1911-38[100]

	1911	1916	1923	1926	1929	1932	1935	1938
Electricity	100	58	33	29	23	20	17	15
Motor Spirit								
Road-use	100	94	127	94	67	83	96	99
Off-road	100	94	127	94	54	44	57	59
Oil	100	83	27	29	28	27	17	22
Coal	100	105	230	191	183	172	161	177
Gas	100	100	163	150	136	135	135	132

Sources: CSO, New Zealand Statistics, 1911, Part IV; Ibid, 1916, Volumes II and III; Industrial Manufacture, 1923; Factory Production, 1926, 1929; Factory and Building Production, 1932, 1935, 1938; Trade and Shipping, 1923-38; NZYB, 1933, p.244; 1935, p.229; 1939, p.251.

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99. AJHR, 1936, D1, p.xvi.

100. Gas and electricity prices have been calculated by dividing the revenue from energy sales by the cubic footage and units sold in March years. Coal prices are based on the amount and value of coal used in gasworks, also in March years. The value of oil-fuels imported in each calendar year has been divided by their volume to reach their comparative price-level. Motor spirit for road use was taxed from 1927; that for other purposes from 1931. The amount of taxation (in pence) has simply been added to the imported cost to maintain a rough comparability. In practice, there were wide fluctuations in the retail price of motor spirit during the late 'twenties and early 'thirties (Appendix A). This was due partly to increases in taxation and partly to exchange-rate changes, particularly against the United States dollar. Despite these added costs, there appears to have been a strong tendency for premium-grade petrol to settle at around 1/10d., with regular-grade consistently a penny cheaper. Thus the cost of petrol for motoring tended to increase during the early 'thirties when measured against the average wage and the general cost of living. On the other hand, substantial additional costs were being absorbed, and most of the taxation was spent by the Main Highways Board and thus passed on to the motorist in better roads.

precipitately over the interwar period. Coal and gas, on the other hand, remained well above their pre-war levels. Their rise in price to a large extent reflected the lift in wage-rates in the coal-mining, land transport, and shipping and cargo-handling industries. By 1926 rates in those industries were up to 82%, 77%, and 114% respectively on their 1909-13 averages.[101] Moreover, as overseas, these tended to be the industries most prone to labour disputes, leading to inconvenience and loss on the part of customers.[102]

More generally, wage rates had clearly outstripped interest rates since the beginning of the war, thus making investment in labour-saving machinery more attractive. The normal bank overdraft rate during the 'twenties was 6½%, as against 5½% at the end of 1913.[103] This represented an increase of around 18%. In comparison, the nominal-wage index was up between 46% (1920) and 64% (1929-30) on 1914.[104] Moreover, unskilled workers, the backbone and biceps of the old technology, appear to have gained ground on their skilled counterparts. Clinkard's index shows the latter 45.5% ahead of their 1901 rates in 1919; the former 54.4%.[105]

However, the greatest factor boosting the acceptance of the new technology in New Zealand was the successful nature of the country's economic development, particularly since the

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101. CSO, Prices, Wages, etc., 1926, p.55.

102. Mining accounted for a third of all labour disputes between 1906 and 1919, and about a half of the workers involved in such disputes were miners. From 1925 to 1932 the overwhelming majority of workers involved in strikes were employed in the mining industry. NZYB, 1926, p.787; 1930, p.916; 1933, p.617; 1938, p.816.

103. NZYB, 1924, p.578; 1937, p.566-67.

104. CSO, Prices, Wages, etc., 1929, p.53-54; Ibid., 1930, p.50-52.

105. G.W.Clinkard, "Wages and Working-hours in New Zealand, 1897-1918", NZYB, 1919, p.860-935.

eighteen-nineties. Unfortunately, the only systematic index of increasing earnings over that period is the Census survey of factory employment. However, this represented a significant and growing proportion of the workforce.[106] Between 1891 and 1926 male factory worker earnings rose by 205%, and female earnings by 186%.[107] This compared with an increase in prices of 157% for house-rents, 93% for dairy products, and 74% for meat.[108] Between 1911 and 1926 male earnings increased by 102%, and female earnings by 126%.[109] Over the same period the All Groups Price Index rose by around 78%.[110] Most other sectors of the community shared in the same prosperity. Certainly wage rates in factory industries do not appear to have increased greatly in excess of those in other industries between 1901 and 1926.[111] Furthermore, factory earnings for male and female workers, at £230 and £99 respectively, did not vary much from the male and female median incomes of £205 and £105 in the census of 1926.[112]

In that year New Zealand had one of the highest per capita incomes in the world.[113] It was also one of the most

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106. 10.14% of the workforce in 1891; 14.5% in 1926. Census, 1891. Part VII, p.245-61, Appendix B, p.xx; Census, 1926, Vol.9, p.50; Factory Production, 1926, p.12.

107. Census, 1901, Appendix A, p.vii; Factory Production, 1926, p.12.

108. NZYB, 1915, p.783; CSO, Prices, Wages, etc., 1926, p.1-2.

109. Census, 1916, Appendix D, p.xxxiii.

110. NZYB, 1919, p.799; CSO, Prices, Wages, etc., 1926, p.1.

111. Ibid., p.55.

112. Census, 1926, Vol.XI, p.6.

113. H.F. Lydall, The Structure of Earnings, Oxford, 1968, p.234.

evenly spread.[114] With the exception of house rentals, prices were low on the scale of the industrialised world. Consequently real incomes were comparatively high.[115] Furthermore, as in other developed countries, the birth-rate had been dropping for some time[116] and therefore necessary household expenditure on food and clothing was falling. These factors combined to leave very many New Zealanders with a large measure of discretionary income which could be expended on new consumer goods.

Similarly, a widespread literacy was reflected in the large circulations of local newspapers, whose columns and advertising fostered an awareness of these recent innovations, their cost, and their availability. In Christchurch, the Star, a fervent disciple of modernisation, claimed an audited circulation of twenty thousand on 29 June, 1935. Even taking into account deliveries outside the urban area this was an impressive performance for one of four newspapers in a city of around thirty-two thousand dwellings with six thousand men unemployed. The advertisements in the Star and its competitors presented the full panoply of consumer items to be found in Britain or the United States, from cigarettes to gramophones and from motor cars to lingerie.

Favourable returns from exports of farm products and the import of developmental capital continued to underpin

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114. Ibid., p.193-94, 234-35.

115. C. Clark, Conditions of Economic Progress, London, 1960, p.88-197.

116. The weighted total rate on the basis of all women 15 and under 45 dropped from an index figure of 2416 in 1878 to 1000 in 1926. NZYB, 1933, p.80.

this prosperity up to 1926. However, the consequences of technological change were already starting to knock away these supports. In common with most other developed countries, New Zealand was to move from the 'twenties to the 'thirties with the paradox of technological progress in the midst of a severe economic crisis.

CHAPTER TWO

THE ECONOMIC CRISIS

The popular view of the causes of the depression is dominated by the collapse of the New York stock exchange boom in late October, 1929. However, the experience of most countries, including that of the United States itself, suggests that the "Wall Street Crash" was more a symptom than a cause of the depression.[1] Currency crises, high unemployment, falling prices and increased bankruptcy were severe in most of the advanced world by the beginning of 1929. One set of measurements, used by the Brookings Institution, suggests that Australia and the Dutch East Indies entered the depression in 1929; Germany, Finland and Brazil in 1928; and Poland, Canada and Argentina in early 1929. Even the United States experienced a sharp downturn before the stock market crash, along with Belgium and Italy.[2] Rather than being a product of a sudden collapse, the extremely depressed economic conditions of the late 'twenties and early 'thirties were the outcome of a series of developments which gradually disrupted the existing system of international finance and trade from 1914.

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1. C. Kindleberger, The World in Depression, 1929-39, London, 1973, p.114-118; C.Schedvin, Australia and the Great Depression, Sydney, 1970, p.49. "To open the tale of the world depression with the stock-market crash in New York in October, 1929, is like starting the story of a flood at the moment when the last sod in the dyke gave way". H. Hodson, Slump and Recovery, 1929-37, London, 1938, p.53.

2. Quoted in P.Fearon, The Origins and Nature of the Great Slump, 1929-32, London, 1979, p.31.

Britain had been the hub of this system. Due to its early industrialisation and need to import food and raw materials, it became not only the "workshop of the world" but its emporium and bank as well. "World prices" for most commodities were effectively London prices, and the City dominated the international money market.

This leadership was being strongly challenged by the United States and Germany before 1914. A number of factors had assisted the relative rise of those countries, including their development of large home markets behind protective tariffs while exporting to free-trade Britain. However, changing technology was also an important element in Britain's comparative decline. British industry tended to lag behind in the adoption of important new technical innovations, not least in electrical and motor engineering.[3] This was not necessarily because of some inherent conservatism amongst British entrepreneurs. For instance, there appears to have been severe technical barriers to the adoption of some new methods in the coal and the iron and steel industries - two particular laggards.[4] Often the alternatives to innovation were more financially rewarding and safer than gambling on the future course of economic development. Steam and gas were far more cost-competitive with electricity and oil in Britain than in most other countries until well into the twentieth century. This appears to have retarded in turn the development of the motor and electrical engineering industries by limiting

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3. D. Aldcroft (Ed.), The Development of British Industry and Foreign Competition, 1875-1914, London, 1968, p.32-35.

4. R.Sayers, A History of Economic Change in Britain, 1880-1939, London, 1967, p.78-93.

their home markets.[5] Similarly, unlike most of their German and American counterparts, British capitalists had developed very extensive sources of investment within their formal and informal empire. These provided very profitable and generally secure alternatives to investment in innovation at home. It frequently made more sense to invest in enterprises overseas rather than in new ways of producing goods at home which would then face prohibitive tariffs on international markets.[6] The availability of resources also played an important role. The United States discovered and developed large oilfields at several points within its continental boundaries and was by 1913 producing over two-thirds of the world's petroleum. It continued to hold roughly that share of the rapidly growing world output of oil between the wars.[7] The British were not yet aware of the liquid wealth lying beneath the North Sea and would probably have lacked the technology necessary to tap it. Furthermore, Britain did not have the vast distances, the widely scattered towns and farms, or the higher average standard of living which all underpinned the development of the American motor industry.

By 1914 Britain was running a large deficit on visible trade but this loss was more than off-set by a massive surplus

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5. T. Sakamoto, "Technology and Business in the British Electrical Industry, 1880-1914", in A. Okachi and H.Uchida (Eds.), Development and Diffusion of Technology: Electrical and Chemical Industries, Tokyo, 1980, p.56.

6. A. Cairncross, Home and Foreign Investment, 1870-1913, Cambridge, 1953, p.222-235. Also C. Wilson, Economic History and the Historian, London, 1969, p.199.

7. G. Jenkins, Oil Economists' Handbook, London, 1977, p.85.

on invisibles.[8] British capital had helped to develop the economies of other countries, particularly those supplying raw materials and food to Britain. Now the profit and interest on that investment was flowing back to London from Argentine railways, Australasian freezing works, and North American mines. The world's largest merchant marine fleet also made a significant contribution. Overall Britain remained by far the most powerful trading country, and the size of its trade enabled it to perform a beneficial balancing role in the international economy.[9] Its proportionately modest deficit in commodity trade permitted many smaller countries to maintain comfortable surpluses. Simultaneously, the continued export of British capital promoted further development overseas.

The Great War devastated this arrangement. British traders lost markets both to local entrepreneurs and to American and Japanese competitors, while much of the pride of the British merchant marine succumbed to the U-boats. Above all, the conflict tore apart the financial cocoon which Britain had spun around itself at the height of its powers. Existing investments overseas were extensively liquidated or mortgaged to pay for wartime supplies, and substantial foreign debts were incurred. This was particularly evident in the United States, previously Britain's largest field for investment. London was now a net debtor to New York. In 1929 total British overseas investments were still

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8. P. Bagwell and G. Mingay, Britain and America, 1850-1939: A Study in Economic Change, London, 1967, p.98-99.

9. L. Williams, Britain and the World Economy, 1919-1970, London, 1971, p.11.

less in money terms than they had been in 1914. Moreover, many of these funds were now in war debts on which interest and repayments were unreliable. There was some net new investment during the 'twenties, but at an annual rate forty per cent less in money terms than in the years immediately before the war. The decline in real terms was much greater due to wartime inflation.[10] Clearly Britain was no longer powerful enough to act as guarantor of the world's financial stability in a crisis. Either it had to relinquish that role to the United States, or the two major powers had to perform an unprecedented dual balancing act on a tight-rope still vibrating from the shock of war. Their failure, catastrophic for performers and spectators alike, was hardly surprising.

Neither party succeeded in quickly discarding roles that had taken more than a century to develop. Post-war America was as dominant as ever in the new technology which was now taking over industrial production. Yet Washington refused to lower tariffs or to revalue in order to reduce its vast and growing trade surplus. Consequently other countries now found it extremely difficult to meet their greater foreign financial commitments (not least to the United States itself) by running a surplus on their commodity trade. Nor did the British authorities appreciate the change in their country's economic standing. In 1925 they hastened its decline with a substantial revaluation of sterling which disastrously reduced

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10. R. Skidelsky, "Retreat from Leadership; The Evolution of British Economic Foreign Policy, 1870-1939", in B. Rowland (Ed.), Balance of Power or Hegemony: The Interwar Monetary System, New York, 1976, p.171. Hodson, op.cit., p.10-11.

the competitiveness of British production. Wage cuts, industrial strife, and higher unemployment followed in what was still by far the largest international market for food and raw materials.[11] World commodity prices slumped and primary producing areas suffered accordingly.

The impact of this development was partially off-set by the continued flow of new foreign investment, particularly from the United States. New York had taken over London's pre-war role as the major provider of such investment during the 'twenties. American money tended to go to Central Europe and Latin America, whereas British investors now favoured Australasia.[12] In both cases a high proportion of the capital went into central and local government bond issues.[13] In the case of American investors this was partly because of the size of the outflow to areas where they lacked the experience and channels of direct investment previously built up by their European competitors. But official borrowing was on the increase in most debtor areas, including Australasia. Much of this money was invested in aspects of the new technology such as electric power stations and distribution networks, improved roads, and the electrification and motorisation of services. These tasks were frequently the responsibility of governments rather than private enterprise. Often they were undertaken in response to political pressures rather than the prospect of an economic

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11. Kindleberger, op.cit., p.88-89; Britain's share of international trade in 1929 was 21.5%; that of the United States 16%. Schedvin, op.cit., p.13.

12. Kindleberger, op.cit., p.54-57; Schedvin, op.cit., p.100.

13. Kindleberger, op.cit., p.43-44.

return. With the development of the consumer society and wide extension of the franchise, politicians were competing for support amongst people of limited means who were aware of, and eager for, the advantages that new technology could provide. In the process, levels of official spending and employment, and standards of living, tended to become very reliant upon overseas borrowing.

Following the break in prices for primary production in 1926, developing economies became even more dependent on this borrowing, often to finance stockpiles.[14] However, the flow of foreign loans was severely constricted by the rapid rise of the New York Stock Exchange from around the middle of 1928.[15] International capital had been strongly attracted by the astounding growth of American industry and the shakiness of economies elsewhere. Now an "easy money" policy on the part of the Federal Reserve Board fueled a boom which drained funds from throughout the world, including agricultural areas of the United States itself.[16] Interest rates were high, business contracting, and unemployment severe in most countries by the end of the year. Nations with developing economies suffered as their sources of loan-money dried up, and they were also hit by a further fall in commodity prices, always sensitive to interest rates and alternative speculation.[17]

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14. L. Robbins, The Great Depression, London, 1934, p.74.

15. H. Fleisig, Long-term Capital Flows and the Great Depression: The Role of the United States, 1927-33, New York, 1974, Ch.3.

16. Kindleberger, op.cit., p.102.

17. Ibid., p.88-89. "About the middle of 1928, the trend [in the world wool price] turned downward again and has been descending ever since". Press, 29 March, 1930.

The outflow of capital to America forced the Bank of England to raise its bank rate from 4½% to 6½% during 1929. The Federal Reserve then took similar action, partly in retaliation and partly to curb the speculation. A precipitate fall in share prices resulted.[18]

The collapse of the speculative boom brought a glimmer of real recovery.[19] However, it was snuffed out by the widespread adoption of greater protection, largely in response to the American Smoot-Hawley tariff of 1930.[20] This Act was in turn the outcome of a legislative process initiated by President Hoover in 1928 to fulfil promises made to American farmers hard-hit by the fall in commodity prices since Britain's revaluation. The shrinkage in world trade which resulted from this upsurge in protection compounded the effect of the reduction in United States foreign investment since the middle of 1928. Together these developments led to a financial collapse in Central Europe in 1931. This collapse exposed the inability of the Bank of England to fill its pre-war role as international lender of last resort and American banks did not step forward to replace it. Substantial British funds disappeared, London overseas lending virtually ceased, and a run on sterling forced it off the gold standard. The new British government which emerged from the crisis moved to increase protection, to encourage internal economic activity, and to create its own international trading bloc.

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18. Kindelberger, op.cit., p.112-116.

19. Ibid., p.128-129.

20. Ibid., p.77-78, 131-134; H.Fleisig, "The United States and the Non-European Periphery", in H. Van der Wee (Ed.), The Great Depression Revisited, The Hague, 1972, p.161-64.

A gradual recovery began in most major economies during the third quarter of 1932 as high tariffs, low interest rates, and cautiously reflationary government policies rekindled confidence.[21] Demand for raw materials and food increased, and commodity prices generally showed a rising trend. The British economy enjoyed one of the strongest recoveries during the 'thirties.[22] This was due largely to the growth of industries based on the domestic consumer, including housebuilding, home appliances, and motor cars. British industry began to have considerable success with the new technology, particularly at home and within its trading bloc.[23] Generally speaking, countries dependent on trade with Britain now participated in its good fortune, just as they shared in its troubles during the 'twenties. However, international trade remained stunted.[24] The world economy awaited the outcome of another global war and the emergence of the United States as the predominant power.

The degree to which the crisis affected individual nations varied according to their dependence on external trade, their principal industries, and the policies pursued by their governments and financial institutions. None of the technically advanced states could escape from the slump, but its effects could generally be ameliorated, or worsened, by local action. For example, most governments of small nations rightly chose to raise tariffs in order to protect their

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21. H. Richardson, Economic Recovery in Britain, 1932-39, London, p.19, 299-312; Kindelberger, op.cit., p.233, 243; Schedvin, op.cit., p.283.

22. Richardson, op.cit., p.313.

23. R. Sayers, A History of Economic Change in England, 1880-1939, London, 1967, p.26.

24. Aldcroft, op.cit., p.246.

economies from having the debris of the disintegrating international system dumped onto them. These measures added to the world crisis but shielded their own manufactures and exporters to some extent. Small economies faced collapse if they attempted to shoulder the burden that the giants either would not, or could not, bear.

Some governments went further. They eschewed the traditional policies of cutting spending, balancing budgets, and eliminating borrowing. Instead they employed deficit spending to reflate their economies, particularly through public works. Various measures were used to deflect any consequent flood of imports. These included higher tariffs, exchange controls, import licensing, and devaluation. Such policies had considerable success in Sweden, Japan, and Germany, and went some way towards combatting the particularly severe and intractable American depression.[25] Similarly, an early recovery appears to have been brought about in Australia by increased tariffs and a large devaluation. Together, these measures sparked a rapid growth in local manufacturing long before the rise in prices for primary products.[26]

In New Zealand, on the other hand, there were repeated attempts to reduce the limited insulation of the internal economy. The aim was to diminish competition for capital and labour with the export sector, as the Reform and Coalition governments in particular could only envisage an export-led

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25. Richardson, op.cit., p.299-312.

26. Schedvin, op.cit., p.10-12, 168, 212.

recovery.[27]

New Zealand's economy was certainly very vulnerable to the world crisis, particularly as it affected Britain. The combined value of exporting and overseas borrowing equalled roughly a third that of the Gross Domestic Product. Three-quarters of exports went to Britain in 1925 and central and local government both borrowed extensively on the London money market.[28] Australia was the other main source of overseas investment and trade, and there were strong Australasian business links, not least in banking. Australia was to be particularly hard-hit by falling farm export prices and a drying up of foreign loans between 1928 and 1931.[29] The lack of a central bank was also a handicap in seeking to monitor and control developments within the New Zealand economy or the movement of capital overseas.

Even so, New Zealand was far from completely dependent on international trade; a newborn Canterbury lamb totally without shelter in an economic southerly. There was a significant local market for most forms of primary produce,[30] manufacturing was well-established,[31] and the country still met

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27. There was a strong tendency towards insulation in the Labour Party. Long before the collapse of international prices in 1931, Dan Sullivan, Labour MP for Avon and a future Minister of Industries and Commerce could write that "my own view is that we should aim at making New Zealand a self-contained economic unit". Times, 18 July, 1929. See also E. Olssen, John A. Lee, Dunedin, 1977, p.47-48.

28. In March, 1926, 53.5% of the public debt and 24% of the local body debt were held in London. NZYB, 1934, p.690, 471.

29. Schedvin, op.cit., p.96-106.

30. During the three years 1930-32, a time of diminishing local consumption and rapidly increasing exports, New Zealand still consumed 23% of its butter production. Levels for other farm products included cheese, 5.4%; mutton, 47.4%; pork, 54.3%; bacon and ham, 98.2%. Sun, 19 October, 1933.

31. Value added in factories not involved in processing farm exports amounted to over £24 million in 1925-26, compared with £8.5 million in all farm-processing factories. CSO, Factory Production, 1926.

most of its own energy requirements. By 1926 New Zealand was producing most of its own food, fuel, clothing, furniture and building materials; many of its own machines and home appliances; and much of its own investment capital.[32]

One argument repeatedly used to support internal deflation was that export farming faced a "collapse" if its wage costs were not reduced and held down.[33] Given the importance of primary exports to the dominion's economy, such a prospect certainly threatened disaster. However, debt-servicing was the main problem facing most farmers, or at least the multitude who had mortgaged land since the war.[34] The government recognised this from early in 1931 with a series of measures designed to prevent foreclosures and later to reduce debt. Furthermore, generalisations about a collapse of "farming" and "the farmer" were misleading. As F.L. Hutchinson, the president of the Canterbury Manufacturers' Association, pointed out at the time of devaluation in 1933, "though a farmer might fail, farming would not fail...Someone else would take hold and carry farming on, though perhaps on a different basis".[35] There was also a considerable variation in the financial situations of farmers, even though most government measures failed

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32. For example, 45% of the public debt was locally held, and 67.5% of the local body debt. NZYB, 1934, p.690, 471.

33. AJHR, 1931. B6 (Supp.), statement by W. Downie Stewart, 6 October, 1931; 1933, B6, Statement by J.G. Coates, 9 November, 1933. "The inescapable question before the Government is whether the farmer is to break or be saved. If he breaks, the country breaks, the Government breaks, the Budget breaks; the issue is as simple as that, and it is urgent". Press, 21 January, 1936.

34. AJHR, 1934, H30, Report of the Dairy Industry Commission, p.60; J. Condliffe, The Welfare State in New Zealand, Westport (Connecticut), 1975, p.14-21.

35. Sun, 27 April, 1933.

to make a distinction. The angry solicitors, bankers, share-brokers and accountants who protested at devaluation were particularly incensed by the fact that so many rich farmers were benefitting at the expense of the rest of the community. They compared the government's action to the provision of a dole regardless of need. These professionals were in good positions to know that "many farmers were wealthy men, many had large sums on fixed deposit, many had large interest-bearing investments, many had freehold properties".[36] During the same year, a survey of South Island farmers, carried out by Lincoln College, revealed that a third were mortgagees.[37] The local Lands Department had earlier noted that the number of farms abandoned in Canterbury was "not appreciably greater than in the boom times".[38]

Above all, there is no evidence of an incipient "collapse" in farm production at any time during the early 'thirties. On the contrary, New Zealand farmers joined their counterparts overseas in producing more in order to off-set lower prices. A brief slowing in the increase in farm exports during the 1930-31 season was due not to rural despair but to wool stock-piling and a year which the Yearbook described as "remarkable.., one of the coldest and also one of the driest on record".[39] Lambing and dairy production along the eastern coasts of both islands were hard-hit, especially in Hawke's Bay, Marlborough, and South Canterbury.[40]

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36. Press, 2 February, 1933. Also B. Moore and J. Barton, Banking in New Zealand, Wellington, 1935, p.370.

37. Sun, 15 November, 1933.

38. Sun, 10 June, 1933.

39. NZYB, 1932, p.31.

40. CSO, Factory Production, 1930, 1931, "Meat Freezing and Preserving", and "Butter, Cheese, and Condensed Milk Factories".

If the government had wished to insulate the domestic economy to a much greater degree, the machinery was either available or capable of being set up rapidly. New Zealand had its own note issues, bank legislation, and collection of banking statistics. Although it did considerable business in Australia, the dominion's largest bank was based in Wellington, and the government directed official transactions through it. There was no constitutional barrier to the state's power to legislate on trade, banking, and finance. Nor does there seem to have been any danger of a disastrous run on bank deposits, as in the United States[41] and, to some extent, in New South Wales. In contrast to the American situation, the banking system in New Zealand was in the hands of a few patently sound institutions. They possessed large reserves, tended to co-operate, and were in fact somewhat embarrassed by a large accumulation of fixed deposits.[42] Furthermore, the leaders of the Coalition could never be portrayed with conviction as wild-eyed socialists bent on stealing people's savings. Like most conservatives in government, they had the opportunity to change policy quite radically without promoting panic and "counter-revolution". Their failure to take such action to reduce the misery being imposed on so many citizens was not based solely on a lack of imagination and restricted access to new ideas. It was also founded on the belief that New Zealand had, and should continue to have, a colonial economy.

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41. M. Friedman and A. Schwartz, The Great Contraction, Princeton, 1965, p.46-63.

42. Moore and Barton, op.cit., p.20-24.

Yet, as in most other technically advanced nations, the rapid adoption of new technology after the Great War increased the need for government action to stimulate internal economic activity and to manage imports.

In particular, the national debt had increased dramatically between 1919 and 1926, from £151 million to £239 million, a rise of just under 45%.[43] A large part of this had been spent on farm settlement for returned servicemen, and still more on new railways. However, over a third had been invested in hydro-electric power development, telecommunications and roads.[44] Local body indebtedness more than doubled, from £23 million to £52 million.[45] An even greater proportion of these borrowings than those of central government was invested in aspects of the new technology such as electricity supply, improved sewerage and water supply, stronger roads, street-lighting, and the general electrification and motorisation of equipment.[46] Electric power boards alone had borrowed £8.7 million since their creation in 1921.[47] In addition, over half the £13 million expended by boroughs out of loans between 1919 and 1926 went on roads, light and power alone.[48] The annual interest bill on these vastly augmented local and central government liabilities had increased from £6.4 million in 1919 to £10.8 million in 1926.[49] This represented a very large transfer of resources to those with a propensity to save, and its deflationary effect was

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43. NZYB, 1926, p.579; 1934, p.690.
44. NZYB, 1926, p.574.
45. NZYB, 1934, p.471.
46. NZYB, 1928, p.656.
47. NZYB, 1932, p.563.
48. NZYB, 1920-26, "Expenditure Out of Loans - Boroughs Only".
49. CSO, Local Authorities Handbook, 1927, p.140; NZYB, 1924, p.517.

increased by the fact that almost half of the interest payable overseas. Local bodies were further obliged to accumulate large sinking funds in bank accounts and gilt-edged securites to meet the eventual repayment of their loans. Between 1919 and 1926 the amount in such sinking funds rose from £2.7 million to £5.7 million.[50] Substantial depreciation and renewal reserves were also built up because so much of the money had been spent on working machinery. Over the same period the amount of local body loan balances, reserve investments and cash in hand, excluding sinking funds, increased from £2.8 to £9.7 million.[51] Private industrial and transport firms built up similar funds to meet the costs they had incurred in the adoption of electrical and motor technology. These funds comprised a large proportion of the £6.9 million accumulated in factory "cash in hand, bills receivable, and other operating accounts" in 1926.[52] By 1929 the Chairman of the Bank of New Zealand confessed that the bank was experiencing "difficulty in finding investments" for its vast accumulation of fixed deposits.[53] There was clearly a strong need for continued borrowing by government in order to recycle the additional savings. Otherwise the technological transformation of the 'twenties would exert an enormously deflationary influence in the 'thirties.

Now there was also a greater need for the management of imports during a depression. This was not only to prevent

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50. NZYB, 1920, p.117; 1928, p.653.

51. NZYB, 1935, p.476-7.

52. CSO, Factory Production, 1928, p.15.

53. Moore and Barton, op.cit., p.20.

dumping, but because the introduction of new technology and the nature of much of the investment in it would magnify the normal effect of a downturn.

In the first place, a very high proportion of the new capital had been borrowed by central and local government. Investors in private enterprise had to accept some responsibility for their losses during a crisis, and either persevere with lower returns or liquidate their investment. On the other hand, there was extreme pressure on official agencies not to default, partly because of a sense of national or local honour and partly because they would be seeking loans again. Therefore, a vast overseas interest bill became a first charge on export income. There are considerable parallels with Australian experience in this. Across the Tasman official borrowing had helped to build up the infrastructure for the advance of manufacturing during the 'thirties.[54] Similarly, investment in back-blocks roads, electricity supply, and the general electrification and motorisation of services assisted the very large growth in primary exports from New Zealand between 1926 and 1936. Nevertheless, as in Australia,[55] the problem of debt servicing was magnified by the fact that so much of the loan money had been spent on services which improved and diversified people's lives rather than directly earning overseas funds. With the downturn in export prices the burden became very severe. In the year to March, 1932, over a quarter of the value of the country's merchandise exports went to

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54. Schedvin, op.cit., p.4-5.

55. Ibid., p.69-71.

official interest payment alone.[56]

Furthermore, new technology and the continuing "industrial-commercial revolution" were having the net effect of undermining New Zealand's balance of trade. Certainly these developments sustained a growing demand for butter and lamb in Britain between the wars. However, there were alternative suppliers of these goods, including local producers, and prices for them tended to fall relative to manufactured goods. Nor was the market unlimited at economic prices, particularly as there was a growing list of other claims on the consumer's discretionary shillings. Yet the new forms of technology depended more heavily on imports than the forms they displaced. For example, New Zealand produced most of its own coal, but little oil. Therefore, it was now a growing importer of oil. The increasing complexity of machinery also boosted the level of overseas purchases. By the time of the Great War horse-drawn vehicles, boilers, fire-boxes, and steam-engines could be constructed or cast in New Zealand at least as economically as they could be transported from overseas. Not so tractor engines, or hydro-electric turbines. Even when local factories were established to manufacture aspects of the new technology, many of the raw materials and components had to be imported in made-up forms. Moreover, because so much of the new production was market rather than resource based, the large metropolitan nations had the advantage of economies of scale. Their big international companies dominated the patent market

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56. Merchandise exports brought in £30.9 million (NZYB, 1936, p.196) while public debt interest payable overseas amounted to £6.7 million (NZYB, 1933, p.446). Local body interest payable overseas was £1.3 million (NZYB, 1934, p.472).

and had the funds for the modern research and development facilities from which innovations were now increasingly derived.[57]

The same trend was evident with consumer goods as well. Light bulbs, cameras, vacuum cleaners and motor cars had to be imported along with the power cables and diesel lorries. Motion pictures and gramophone records came almost exclusively from overseas. Woollen stockings could be entirely made locally; not so those of artificial silk or cotton. Perishable exotic foods such as pineapples could now be brought in in tinned or bottled form while local food processors had to import tinned plate and, in many cases, bottles. Even the vast quantities of paper and cardboard needed to advertise and package goods for the mass market still had to come from overseas either as pulp or in finished form.

The establishment of New Zealand subsidiaries of international firms and further ventures into manufacturing by local entrepreneurs during the 'thirties exerted some pressure in the opposite direction. But overall the movement towards greater national self-sufficiency seems to have been set back by the continuing development of science-based technology in methods of production and forms of consumption. This reverse trend was reinforced by the consumer's demand for greater variety and new experiences, a demand now assiduously cultivated by advertising.

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57. W. Lewis, "Industrial Research and Development", in M. Kranzberg and C.Pursell, Technology in Western Civilisaton: Vol.II, Technology in the Twentieth Century, New York, 1967, p.621-631.

It was against this background that the dominion faced the effects of the deepening crisis "at Home" after 1925. Export prices dropped sharply in the 1925-26, with wool and meat being particularly hard-hit and dairy products continuing their existing decline.[58] In addition, the London money market was somewhat constricted by Britain's growing financial difficulties, and New Zealand faced higher interest rates on its overseas borrowing.[59]

The response of the Coates Government to the crisis reflected both its political dependence on farmer votes and its ideological commitment to colonial economic status. Reform generally represented the interests of exporters and importers. It maintained that New Zealand was, and should remain, primarily a supplier of farm products to Britain, and a market for British manufacturers and investors. Economic conditions within the country needed to assist primary production, and should normally reflect international conditions. Terms such as "laissez-faire" and "free trade" do not capture this ideology fully. For example, reform was about to set up an Intermediate Farm Credit Board to channel more government money to established farmers. Similarly, Imperial rather

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58. During 1926 the official index price for wool fell 36%, that for meat 26%, and that for dairy produce 7%. With the exception of 1922, the general level of export prices had not been so low since 1915. CSO, Wages, Prices, etc., 1925, p.50; 1928, p.51. There was a deficit of £4.5 million in visible trade for the 1926 calendar year. Judging by the 1930 estimates of the country's deficit on invisibles, New Zealand required a visible trade surplus of around five million pounds to break even after new government borrowing overseas at the 1926 rate. NZYB, 1936, p.196.

59. In May, 1925, 85% of New Zealand's annual London loan, yielding $4\frac{3}{4}\%$, was left with the underwriters following sterling's return to gold. Thereafter New Zealand was forced to offer over five per cent ($5\frac{1}{8}\%$ in 1926). AJHR, 1925, B6, p.21; 1926, B6, p.14.

than international free trade was the party's ideal. Imports of American motor vehicles attracted an increasingly discriminatory tariff during the 'twenties,[60] while Reform's Christchurch newspaper, the Press, treated the trading surplus with Britain as a form of disloyalty,[61] and regretted the Argentine's open access to the Home market.[62] However, there was a certain moral element in the party's attitude; a suggestion that the farmer was the social as well as the economic "backbone of the country".

In keeping with these sentiments the Coates Government followed a deflationary policy as much to help the farmer as to restore equilibrium. It cut general expenditure, reduced public works drastically, and employed relief workers at pay so low as to be uncompetitive with farm wages.[63] State

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60. Comparison between the duties on British and foreign motor vehicles increased (percentage by value):

1921	1926	1930	1934
10:25	10:35	10:40	5:50

NZYB, 1933, p.244; 1937, p.224-25.

61. "The prime consideration, however, is not the exact amount of our trade, but the duty of New Zealanders to omit no opportunity to help the Mother Country at a time when she is in greater need than she has ever been for some return for the immeasurable sacrifices she has made and continues to make for our maintenance as a free nation". Press, 7 September, 1926. Also editorials in Press, 5, 25, 26 October, 2 November, 1926; 19 November, 1929.

62. Press, 20 May, 1932; 29 December, 1933.

63. Public Works Fund expenditure for the first six months of the financial year (in millions):

1925 £2.09 1926 £1.58 1927 £1.47 1928 £1.24.

CSO, Monthly Abstract of Statistics, December issues, 1926-28.

In 1926 the wages of Public Works Department relief workers were set at 9/- per day for single men and 12/6 for married men, both on a forty-seven hour week and a co-operative contract basis (which meant that actual earnings could be much lower). In real terms this rate was lower than the 8/- and 10/- per day of 1933.

advances were also restricted.[64] These measures helped to permit a sharp reduction in government borrowing[65] without greatly increasing taxation to cover the projected fall in customs receipts as imports contracted. Wealthy farmers could thus escape the danger of renewed income tax or much higher tariffs on British imports. They would also face much less state competition for unskilled labour, or for capital. Tentative moves were even made towards dismantling the system of compulsory industrial arbitration, long the bete noire of farmer pressure groups.[66]

The economic outlook had improved considerably by the end of 1928, following a substantial fall in imports and a recovery in export earnings which was mainly due to continued increases in production.[67] Nevertheless, government

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	Advances to Settlers	Advances to Workers
1926	£3.9 million	£ 2.2 million
1927	£3.6 "	£ 2.5 "
1928	£1.4 "	£ 1.4 "

Source: NZYB, 1929, p.639

65. New government borrowing (£ million).

	Overseas	New Zealand	Total
1926	7.8	3.2	11.0
1927	4.9	2.1	7.0
1928	7.5	-1.8	5.7
1929 (to Dec. 1928)	4.1		4.1

Source: NZYB, 1934, p.690; AJHR, 1929, B6.

66. In the debate on the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Amendment Bill of 1927, the Minister of Labour (Hon. G.Anderson) referred to support from "farmers' unions, sheep-owners unions, the Royal Agricultural Society of New Zealand, dairy companies, and other farmers' organisations". NZPD, Vol.216, p.401. On the other hand, the presidents of both the Canterbury and the New Zealand Employers' Associations came out strongly against the bill. Star, 24 August, 13 October, 1927. The Star used it as the basis of a campaign for the revival of Liberalism to save the country from "a reactionary country party" and "a farmers' government". Star, 20 August, 21 October, 1927.

67. The average export price for meat was still three per cent down on 1926 in 1928, but production was up by 27%. The dairy price-index was up by five per cent; production by 11%. CSO, Prices, Wages, etc, 1929, p.51; NZYB, 1937, p.171.

borrowing and spending on public works had been held down, and state advances further cut back. Building activity declined and the growth of production in industries not involved in processing farm products tended to stagnate. Most of the benefits of recovery were still going to farmers and their creditors.[68]

The defeat of Reform in November brought a radical change in economic policy. As the successor to the Liberals, the United Party had a strong tradition of assistance to local manufacturing, state spending on public works to counter depression, and help to aspiring rather than established farmers. Despite encompassing a number of the latter, the newly victorious party looked to its past, not least in its choice of Sir Joseph Ward as leader. It was less prepared than Reform to sacrifice the general standard of living to the interests of those primary producers who had consistently opposed social improvements, even during prosperous times. United came to power with promises of renewed developmental spending, increased state advances, and the maintenance of award wages, even on relief works. During 1929 and 1930 public works expenditure and employment rose to levels well

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68. In 1927-28 the combined value of production from dairy factories, freezing works, and wool scours was up 7.5% on 1925-26; that of other factories only one half of one per cent. CSO, Factory Production, 1926-28. By the end of March, 1928, the percentage of bank advances to deposits was down to 88%, compared with 104% in March, 1927. By September the ratio was the lowest since 1920. NZYB, 1929, p.698.

above those of the mid-'twenties.[69] Thousands of unemployed men, and doubtless many farm labourers, were placed on state construction jobs at award rates. State Advances to Workers reached record levels, maintaining house-building at a time when tight credit, and demographic changes were tending to reduce demand.[70] Advances to Settlers also increased considerably, and the new government initiated a policy of developing land under Department of Agriculture supervision before selling it to settlers.[71]

Most of the increase in state expenditure was funded by borrowing, as promised by Sir Joseph.[72] Some was also derived from higher taxation with a redistributive or protectionist effect. Reversing the trend established by

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69. Average monthly number of workers employed by the Public Works Department (March years):

1928	1929	1930	1931
8087	8752	10,867	12,422

September half year expenditure by P.W.D. (£ million):

1928	1929	1930	1931
1.24	1.41	1.92	1.04

Sources: NZYB, 1933, p.613; CSO, Monthly Abstract of Statistics, January issues, 1930, 1932.

70. Advances to Workers increased from £1.4 million in 1928-29 to £3.3 million in 1929-30. NZYB, 1933, p.456.

71. Advances to Settlers increased from £2.1 million in 1928-29 to £3.6 million in 1929-30. Ibid. p.452.
The establishment of the principle of state land development under the Land Laws Amendment Act, 1929, was one of a number of significant innovations made by the short-lived United Government. P. Smallfield, The Grasslands Revolution in New Zealand, Auckland, 1970, p.26.

72. Net new government borrowing in the year to March, 1929 was £12.7 million, the biggest increase in the 'twenties. NZYB, 1934, p.690.

Reform, Ward raised direct taxation on wealthy farmers.[73] He also doubled primage, a duty on all imports, regardless of origin. Local manufacturing was thus afforded some additional protection against British goods. This protection continued when primage was superseded by heavy increases in all duties in 1930.[74] Finally, the Unemployment Act of 1930 and more particularly its amendment in the following year entailed a considerable redistribution of income towards the poor, those with a greater propensity to spend. The levy of 1930 was rightly criticised as a "poll tax" - although the unemployed still received more from it than it cost them, of course.

Unfortunately the continued development of the international crisis tended to undermine the reflationary effects of these policies. Faced with a tightening world money market during 1929 and 1930, the United Government chose to increase its internal borrowing.[75] This restricted credit within New Zealand but maintained a high level of economic activity. But the effect of falling commodity markets could not be met so readily. Wool prices had begun to slide in February, 1929, and dairy produce in March.

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73. In 1923 income from the direct use or cultivation of land was made exempt from tax, and the general rate of income tax was reduced during the 'twenties. In 1929 Ward reduced the maximum mortgage exemption for land tax, introduced a special land tax on properties with an unimproved value over £14,000, and reinstated income tax on farms over that value. There were further increases in income tax in 1930. NZYB, 1931, p.591.

74. AJHR, 1933, H35, p.3.

75. The government borrowed £5.8 million internally in 1929-30, the highest rate of new official borrowing for a decade. NZYB, 1934, p.690. The Christchurch City Council complained strongly about the resultant upward pressure on interest rates. Times 27 February, 1930.

Meat prices held up only until August.[76] Falling imports removed the deficit on visible trade by the end of 1930, but the traditional loss on invisibles resulted in a heavily deflationary trade balance in 1929-1930 and a much lighter one in 1930-31.[77]

The operation of the trans-Tasman banking system appears to have magnified the effect of the international crisis on New Zealand during 1929 and 1930.[78] During this period, London investors withdrew their support from Australia, which many of them considered extravagant and potentially repudiationist. The banks which operated on both sides of the Tasman then almost certainly used New Zealand credit to meet their Australian commitments. This not only restricted their possible lending here, but affected New Zealand's creditworthiness in London. In the absence of a central bank in Wellington, lending to New Zealand could mean lending to New South Wales and the Lang government. The move to more domestic borrowing in this country therefore probably came much earlier than it would have.

Export prices fell again in the 1930-31 season and returns were down by over a third on 1928-29 levels.[79] Such a dramatic fall in the income of a major sector of the economy inevitably depressed the whole economy. Moreover, its fiscal and political effects brought an end to United's

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76. CSO, Prices, Wages, etc., 1928, p.51; 1929, p.51.

77. In 1929-30 the estimated deficit on all transactions was a massive £13 million; in 1930-31 it was £2.5 million. NZYB, 1936, p.196.

78. G. Hawke, Between Government and Banks, Wellington, p.18-22.

79. £56 million to £36.9 million. NZYB, 1937, p.171.

attempt to maintain economic activity by government spending. Reductions in revenue from customs, land tax, and the railways, and increased spending on unemployment threatened a large deficit before borrowing. With money tightening abroad, it was clear that overseas borrowing would be difficult and expensive.[80] Furthermore, it seemed that the deficit would be greater in 1931-32, at a time when substantial loan repayments were due in London. A major increase in taxation, the main alternative to expenditure cuts, was politically undesirable. Some taxes were increased, but, faced with an election at the end of 1931, the administration's room for manoeuvre was severely limited. Confronted by falling returns, farmers and businessmen were already pressing hard for a reduction of costs, including taxes. Retrenchment could alienate the working people who had formed a large part of United's support in 1928,[81] but Reform posed the biggest threat to most Government M.P.s, including the Prime Minister. That party appeared most likely to benefit electorally from a failure to "cut costs" and the imposition of further taxation.

Consequently the measures introduced to cope with the deficit leant heavily towards retrenchment. In April state pay rates were cut by ten per cent and the Arbitration Court was empowered to reduce existing awards. Simultaneously relief work pay was cut back to 12/6 and 9/- a day for married and single men respectively. Some taxes were

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80. The cost of the London loan increased by ¼% between 1929 and 1930. This converted to ½% and rising if the cost of exchange depreciation is taken into account. AJHR, 1930, B6. The 1931 loan cost almost one per cent more again, and was for only three years. AJHR, 1931, B6.

81. R. Chapman, The Significance of the 1928 General Election unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Auckland, 1948.

increased in July, when the closure of the London market for overseas loans brought the crisis to a head, but major rises were postponed until October, by which time Reform had agreed to share the opprobrium in a coalition.

The economic policy of the Coalition had two aims.[82] Firstly, it sought to balance the budget without heavy internal borrowing, and without sacrificing the country's credit or 'honour' by unilaterally altering financial contracts. This was also supposed to help revive productive investment at lower interest rates by reducing state competition for capital. Secondly, the Coalition aimed to raise farm profitability, thus encouraging export production and saving established farmers from bankruptcy. Within the previous Reform administration these aims had generally been regarded as indistinguishable. Many believed this still to be so, including William Downie Stewart, once again Minister of Finance. However, both the loss of farm income and the proportion of farmers in the government were now so great that even some aspects of 'sound finance' were in jeopardy.

Initially Downie Stewart managed to combine the government's two central concerns in his financial measures. In October, 1931, he increased income tax and customs duties, but abolished the graduated land tax, so hated by large landowners; increased the fertilizer subsidy introduced by Forbes in July; and transferred £250,000 of Main Highways Board funds from road construction to the general funds rural local bodies. These changes put an extra £420,000 onto

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82. AJHR, 1931, B6 (Supp.).

state expenditure at a time when it was being savagely reduced in other areas. In April, 1932, all wage-earners employed by the Public Works Department were put on relief pay rates, and a number of projects were discontinued. Later in the year there were considerable further cutbacks in state wages and salaries, and a myriad of administrative economies, notably in education and health. Those on the lowest income levels also received cuts in pensions and relief work pay.

In all, public account spending was reduced by ten per cent both in 1931-32 and 1932-33.[83] The transactions of the State Advances Department added to the deflation. With repayments now greatly exceeding new advances, and a large income from interest, the department was draining considerable funds from the economy to liquidate its own liabilities.[84] Furthermore, the cuts were very heavy in areas with a multiplier effect, such as public works,[85] whereas overseas interest payments were actually being increased by a ten per cent devaluation against sterling. This compounded the fact that most of the reductions discriminated against the compulsory spenders of society, the poor, in favour of discretionary savers such as wealthy farmers and bondholders.

The impact of retrenchment was especially severe in urban areas. Government spending and employment were concentrated there and city state advances mortgagors continued to be more reliable debtors than their rural

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83. NZYB, 1937, p.467. Figures include Unemployment Fund but not State Advances.

84. During the 1931-32 year State Advances lent just over one million pounds but took in almost £2.8 million in repayments and interest. NZYB, 1933, p.452-57.

85. NZYB, 1937, p.470-71.

counterparts.[86] Even the limited spending power engendered by the Unemployment Board was tending to be diverted from the main centres into the No.4 and "Over the Fence" schemes.[87] Value added in factories not involved in processing export farm products dropped by over 22% in 1931-32 and 5% in 1932-33. This compared with rises of 3.6% and 3.5% respectively in the farm processing industries.[88] Similarly, the value of production in the largely urban-based building industry dropped to less than a quarter of its 1929-30 figure in 1932-33.[89]

Some government measures did shed a little light in the prevailing deflationary gloom. In May, 1932, there was a reduction of twenty per cent in most private interest charges, and income from public securities held in New Zealand was taxed to achieve a similar cut. Mortgagors were also given further opportunities to avoid foreclosure and this may have led to some maintenance of spending. In addition, subsidies from the Unemployment Board for building, gold prospecting, and certain minor industries provided a little stimulation to production and employment. However, the amount of the assistance provided was small.[90] Of far greater importance was the government's merciful decision to finance a part of its spending in 1931-32 by the issue

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86. NZYB, 1933, p.452-54, 456.

87. The "Over the Fence" policy applied the No.5 Scheme to private farm work.

88. Calculated from "value added" figures in CSO, Factory Production, 1931; Factory and Building Production, 1932, 1933.

89. Ibid., "Building Production".

90. At its peak, in 1933-34, £229,460 was expended on the building subsidy. In the same year about £200,000 was spent on gold-prospecting subsidies. NZYB, 1936, p.651.

of treasury bills to the banks.[91] It thus imposed on its Citizens somewhat less than the full cost of the temporary closure of the London market.

Reduced state expenditure, a commandeer on overseas exchange for the banks, a ten per cent devaluation against sterling, the sale of treasury bills, and the reopening of the London loan market together enabled Wellington to meet its sterling commitments for 1932. By the end of the year the dominion had a reflationary balance of payments,[92] a stabilising currency,[93] and the opportunity to borrow at comparatively low rates in Britain.[94] The psychologically important[95] goal of a "balanced budget" seemed to be in sight, without substantial further taxation or retrenchment.

However, the unbalanced political situation undermined this position and helped to prolong the worst of the depression, especially for New Zealand's urban population. Pressure had grown during 1932 for the administration to give more support to export farmers, a group grossly over-represented in the government caucus. The agitation was strongly led by Coates, still leader of the Reform Party and increasingly the dominant force in the Coalition. The interests he championed were finally successful around the

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91. The banks agreed to finance a budget deficit of up to £11.5 million, reducing to £6.5 million by 31 March, 1933. In the event, only £6.5 million of the stand-by was ever used and the government was left with a "floating debt" of only £3.96 million at the end of the year. R. Holder, Bank of New South Wales: Vol.II, 1894-1970, Sydney, 1970; NZYB, 1934, p.691.

92. About £4.3 million in the year to March, 1932. NZYB, 1936, p.196.

93. NZYB, 1936, p.533-34.

94. The average rate of interest on Empire government loans was down to 4.4% in 1932 and was falling. Richardson, op.cit., p.57.

95. Ibid., p.218-9; but c.f. Aldcroft, op.cit., p.306.

end of the year and concern for the welfare of export farmers became the guiding principle of the government's economic policy, shouldering aside Downie Stewart's capitalist idealism.

The officially directed devaluation from £110 to £125 per £100 sterling in January, 1933, overshadowed all other measures introduced on this principle. It increased most farmers' incomes over what they would have been, but the net economic benefit was decidedly questionable, especially for urban New Zealanders. Much has been made of the reflationary effect of the devaluation, and the protection and encouragement it supposedly gave to local manufacturing.[96] In fact, many developments associated with the alteration of the exchange rate militated in the opposite direction.

In the first place, the New Zealand devaluation was not imposed to combat the deflationary effect of a balance of payments crisis, a major reason for devaluation in Australia. Thanks in part to the "natural" depreciation of the New Zealand pound by ten per cent, the country had a large and growing trade surplus during 1932. If this was not proving very reflationary in the face of deflationary government and banking policies, it was these policies that were in need of modification rather than the exchange rate. Furthermore, the impact on the trade balance was not entirely positive. Devaluation also meant higher service charges on overseas debts and further discouraged renewed off-shore borrowing.

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96. Condliffe, op.cit., p.46; W. Sutch, Poverty and Progress in New Zealand, Wellington, 1969, p.228; K. Sinclair and W. Mandle, Open Account: The History of the Bank of New South Wales in New Zealand, 1861-1961, Wellington, 1961, p.201.

It may also have led to lower prices for dairy products, the dominion's most valuable export in 1932-33. This was because New Zealand and Denmark completely dominated the international trade in these products on the London market. Copenhagen simply replied to Wellington's devaluation in kind and the British consumer got his butter much cheaper.[97]

In addition, the compensatory arrangement reached between the government and the banks to meet the expected accumulation of funds in London actually promoted and prolonged that development.[98] It did so by guaranteeing as good a return to the banks on those idle funds as they could get by advancing them in New Zealand to their most secure customers.

Nor did the government's action do anything but worsen its fiscal problems. Because income tax was set at low levels, particularly for farmers, relatively little of the exchange windfall was passed to the government. Yet the devaluation had considerably increased the state's overseas debt charges and import costs. A further decline in private imports due to the change in the exchange rate simultaneously reduced the government's income from customs.

The Coalition chose to counter its increased costs by imposing a sales tax on manufactured items not specifically required by farmers.[99] It followed this course rather than borrowing from the local banks, which were awash with funds. In August, 1933, Coates again rejected a suggestion for a ten million pound loan, to be spent on public works in order

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97. C. Kindleberger, "Competitive Currency Depreciation Between Denmark and New Zealand", Harvard Business Review, Vol.12: 1934, p.416-426.

98. Hawke, op.cit., p.24-25.

99. NZYB, 1936, p.454.

to reflate the economy.[100] On the other hand, the sales tax put up the cost of living and took a slice out of consumer spending. It was hardly an encouragement to manufacturers and retailers to expand investment and employment.

Discretionary purchasing power was cut even more severely in another way. Higher export prices meant higher food prices within New Zealand,[101] and this reduced the capacity of those on low incomes to purchase basic local manufactures such as clothing and footwear. Whether it came from the market or from devaluation, a recovery in export prices needed to be accompanied by an increase in low incomes if manufacturing for consumers was to expand significantly. Such an increase only came much later, through the partial restoration of pay and pension cuts in late 1934 and early 1935. There was no full restoration until August, 1936.[102]

Many of the country's poor were employed on relief works by local bodies. Like the government, these authorites were strongly affected financially by devaluation. Over a third of local body debt was held overseas, and there was now a large additional amount required to service it. Furthermore, a considerable proportion of the fuel, materials, and plant used by local authorities was imported and therefore now cost more. Already under considerable pressure to reduce rates and charges, they were faced with cutting spending in other areas. This probably contributed to the widespread withdrawal

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100. Sun, 16 August, 1933.

101. By December, 1933, the dominion weighted average for the three food groups in the cost-of-living index had risen by 5.3% over that of December, 1932. At the end of the following year the cumulative rise was 8.2%, and by December, 1935, it was 13.8%. CSO, Prices, Wages, etc., 1932-35, p.3.

102. NZYB, 1937, p.668.

from the No.5 Scheme by local authorities during 1933.[103] More unemployed were consequently placed on sustenance or charitable aid, at far lower rates of pay than on relief works. Devaluation also erected another barrier to any resumption of local body lending overseas, which might have increased their spending and employment.

The devaluation tended to be regressive overall. While the cost of higher returns for primary production bore particularly heavily on the poor, the benefits went to wealthy as well as struggling farmers. The census figures for income during 1935 show approximately 9.2% of male farmers had incomes over £364, compared with around 6.1% of the total adult male population.[104] The proportion of sheepfarmers, the group that benefitted most by devaluation, was much greater at 27.2%. Increasing the income of farmers thus meant in Keynesian terms a net transfer to those with a greater propensity to save. Certainly prices and sales of farming land did not take long to lift substantially as export returns rose. As early as May, 1933, one Christchurch real estate agent was observing that demand for farms was "steadily improving".[105] By August, a stock-and-station agency was reporting an increase of 75% in inquiries for farms over the previous twelve months. It noted that "most of the men with cash were after sheep farms".[106] Between the first quarter of 1933 and that of 1934, the average price of farms sold in New Zealand increased by 24%, with a ten per cent increase in numbers sold. In Canterbury the rises were

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103. NZYB, 1936, p.647.

104. Census, 1936, Vol.12, p.61.

105. Sun, 31 May, 1933.

106. Sun, 12 August, 1933. See also Sun, 11 October, 1933.

fifty per cent and 15% respectively.[107]

A considerable proportion of the extra farm income would have been devoted to debt servicing and repayment, whether the farmer was in difficulties or not. There was a large increase in the discharge of mortgages following devaluation, particularly in sheepfarming areas. The value of mortgages discharged in 1933-34 increased by 61% over the previous year. But the figure was 123% in Canterbury, 175% in Otago and 355% in Gisborne.[108] Much of this money would in turn have been withdrawn from productive investment as creditors followed contemporary business wisdom and used it to reduce their own liabilities. Furthermore, although many retired or virtually unemployable people drew low incomes from mortgages, the majority of such investments were held by wealthy individuals and institutions. They would have had an even lower propensity to spend than most farmers, and certainly most of those paying for devaluation through food prices and sales tax. This was reflected in a buoyant market for commercial city properties,[109] renewed interest in the stock exchange,[110] a substantial acceleration in the growth of fixed deposits,[111] and speculation on a possible revaluation of the New Zealand pound.[112] The "liquidity trap" of rural debt, which absorbed so much of the impact of improving export prices for Australian producers,[113]

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107. Calculated from figures in CSO, Monthly Abstract of Statistics, February to April, 1933, 1934, "Land Sales".

108. NZYB, 1936, p.575; 1938, p.704-5.

109. Sun, 31 May, 1933.

110. Ibid.

111. NZYB, 1937, p.560.

112. Sun, 18 August, 1933. Also Sinclair and Mandle, op.cit., p.205.

113. Schedvin, op.cit., p.294.

operated in a varied and voracious manner in New Zealand.

Finally, the provision of greater protection to local manufacturing was, in terms of Reform Party philosophy, an unfortunate side-effect rather than an aim of devaluation. That philosophy had been exemplified by the government's promises at the Ottawa Conference to reduce protection against British goods. In his subsequent statement to the New Zealand parliament, Coates made it clear that he considered the need for such reductions to be widespread.[114] A tariff commission was established in 1933 to examine critically the protection afforded to each industry. These moves, and the attitude behind them, contrasted strongly with the Australian experience at the time of devaluation there. Then tariffs had been raised sharply and manufacturers were well aware that they had a government strongly and openly in support of their interests. Faced with the attitude of the New Zealand government in 1933, it would have been a very optimistic manufacturer indeed who increased his investment on the basis of the alteration in exchange rates. The management of one firm which had continued to make good profits throughout the early 'thirties due to continued high protection decided to conceal its real financial situation "in view of the Tariff Commission and some other considerations". "Secret reserves were created" rather than have the increased profit distributed in dividends or invested in expansion further to that already planned.[115] As the product of the commission's deliberations emerged during 1934, one Christchurch electrical manufacturer talked of "alarm

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114. NZPD, Vol.233, p.544-49.

115. J. Angus, Papermaking Pioneers, Mataura, 1976, p.111.

amounting almost to despair".[116] Some long-established businesses faced liquidation.[117] In the event, actual changes to tariffs up to the end of 1935 were not nearly as great as feared,[118] but the fear undoubtedly restricted the confidence of manufacturers.

Moreover, there was an almost universal belief that the "artificial" rate was only a temporary expedient. The government presented it as a medium-term response to a crisis which it repeatedly claimed would soon be over.[119] Financiers said the change in rate could not last, and the Opposition was strongly opposed to it. Devaluation was clearly not a firm basis on which to invest money in manufacturing. This was particularly so when most of the modern machinery needed to increase production was imported and therefore subject to exchange. Indeed, investment in machinery, plant, tools, and implements in domestic manufacturing fell in each complete March year after devaluation until 1936-37 (Fig. 2.1). Yet there had been a marginal increase in such investment during the apparently very bleak year of 1932-33.[120] Similarly, examination of the volume and value of production in New Zealand industries reveals that recovery often began in 1932-33 and frequently slowed in 1933-34.[121]

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116. Sun, 22 August, 1934.

117. Sun, 7 July, 1934.

118. NZYB, 1937, p.216.

119. "Turning the corner" attained a similar political status to the later "light at the end of the tunnel". Manufacturers were probably more influenced by the long-term uncertainty implied in official statements. For example, that high exchange would remain "until at least the end of the present export season". AJHR, 1933, B6, Statement by Rt. Hon. J.G. Coates, Minister of Finance, 9 November, 1933, p.18.

120. The increase in investment in these industries had been £67,000 in 1932-33, as against a fall of £492,000 in 1933-34.

121. See Appendix B.

FIG. 2.1: INVESTMENT IN PLANT AND MACHINERY IN MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY IN NEW ZEALAND, 1922-38

Source: CSO, Factory Production, 1922-31; Factory and Building Production, 1932-38, "Valuation Motive Power, Location, and Character of Organisation".

Other evidence casts some doubt on the importance of devaluation in recovery, at least in urban New Zealand. Both the number and value of building permits issued in the larger towns of New Zealand were significantly higher after September, 1932, than they had been during the corresponding months during 1931. In January, 1933, the month of devaluation, this trend was reversed and not firmly re-established until six months later.[122] Business in Christchurch was certainly showing some signs of recovery well before devaluation. One local newspaper reported a revival of sales in the areas of drapery, motor vehicles, real estate and radios as early as August, 1932.[123] A few weeks later it noted an increase in the number of small building jobs and a tendency for share prices to firm.[124] Greater retail activity was again noted early in November.[125] Similarly, the approach to Christmas, 1932, seems to have seen a considerable growth in spending in the city over the previous festive season. Bicycle retailers reported a "boom", with one firm claiming to be at its busiest in ten years.[126] There was also a significant rise in the number of motor cars registered

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122. CSO, Monthly Abstract of Statistics, 1932-34, February issues, "Building Permits in Larger Towns". Unfortunately the situation is somewhat confused by the operation of the Unemployment Board's building subsidy, which was in force between 1 July and 31 December 1932, and June to September, 1933. NZYB, 1934, p.601. The local secretary of one trade union in the building industry related the sudden downturn to confusion over the effects of exchange and sales tax. Sun, 13 February, 31 March, 1933.

123. Sun, 20 August, 1932.

124. Sun, 8 September, 1932.

125. Sun, 7 November, 1932.

126. Sun, 30 November, 1932.

during December.[127] Accommodation at Christchurch beaches was selling briskly by September[128] and Christmas Eve saw the heaviest sale of tickets for the ferry train "in the memory of present officers".[129] Retailers reported better "last-minute" trading in both city and suburbs.[130] There would seem to be some room for argument that New Zealand had been experiencing a measure of domestic recovery late in 1932, in common with much of the rest of the developed world. Further, it seems possible that the timing and nature of the devaluation tended to set recovery back.

Some other government policies probably contributed a little to recovery. Cheaper capital may have become more available following the conversion of the internal public debt to lower rates of interest. But this did not add much to the effect of the previous year's taxation of that interest.[131] Certainly the government did not use the reduction in its debt charges to borrow once more, at lower rates. Measures to encourage spending were more urgently required than conversion, but were less in evidence. The further relaxation of private mortgage commitments helped, and continued building subsidies almost certainly promoted activity in this important multiplier sector. The very modest increase in public works expenditure between 1933 and 1936 would have had a similar effect. However, the total increase over that period was less than one million pounds,

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127. Sun, 17, 30 December, 1932.

128. Sun, 9 September, 1932.

129. Sun, 24 December, 1932.

130. Sun, 23, 24 December, 1932.

131. NZYB, 1937, p.487.

compared with a drop of almost three million pounds in 1932-33.[132] The belated partial restoration of the state pay and pension cuts also increased spending during 1935.

The impact of such policies were largely nullified by devaluation and the continued severe restraint on total government spending. The Coalition actually achieved a budget surplus of £1.8 million in 1934-35, including a handsome contribution from the Unemployment Board.[133] Thus rather than injecting more money into the economy, the government was tending to take it out. Although the amount spent on the public account did increase, it was still well below the level of 1930-31 as late as 1935-36.[134] Moreover, much of the increase in expenditure was due to the costs of exchange. Similarly, the surplus of repayments and interest over lending by the State Advances Department increased steadily to 1936.[135] Even the public debt was reduced. Between 1932 and 1935 it fell by approximately £1.3 million, and £.5 million of the new total was the outcome of the conversion operation.[136] The economy was recovering from 1933 onwards despite, rather than because of, the policies of the government.[137]

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132. Ibid., p.470-71.

133. Ibid., p.467.

134. Ibid., loc.cit.

135. Ibid., p.504-508.

136. NZYB, 1939, p.501; 1934, p.691.

137. One prominent businessman who was on speaking terms with Coates firmly allocated the blame for these policies to him. N. Robinson, James Fletcher: Builder, London, 1970, p.109-111. Fletcher claimed that Coates had told him that he confidently expected that the accumulation of reserves in London would bring political as well as economic benefits.

It was essentially the rising prices received for exports of primary produce and the continued low level of imports that brought about the sluggish economic improvement internally to 1936. Unfortunately, the recovery in many overseas economies from about the third quarter of 1932 was only reflected in higher prices for New Zealand exports well into the following year.[138] Wool was clearly on the upswing in April, and its average price during the June year in 1934 was almost double that of 1933. Prices for meat and other pastoral products had begun to improve by the winter of 1933, and the decline in prices for dairy produce slowed somewhat. The wool price was to fall sharply once again in the 1934-35 season, and dairy prices did not show any substantial rise until 1935-36. However, thanks to higher incomes for sheep-farmers and increased dairy production, overall returns were higher in 1934 than in 1930.[139] By 1936 they had risen above the record levels of the 'twenties, but were accompanied by a much lower rate of importation. Merchandise exports exceeded imports by £16 million in 1934, £10 million in 1935, and £12.5 million in 1936. Such massive trade surpluses could not fail to stimulate activity, despite the fact that much of the increase was being frozen in fixed deposit accounts until late in 1934.

However, the sluggishness with which the rising overseas returns affected other sectors demonstrated the basic limitations of the policy of waiting for an export-led recovery. As with increases in the volume of primary produc-

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138. CSO, Prices, Wages, etc., 1933-36, "Export Prices".

139. NZYB, 1938, p.225, 229, 230, 247, for these and the following figures.

tion, and the effect of devaluation, it was clearly demonstrated that the export sector could not absorb a much greater proportion of the workforce. There was only a minute rise in the percentage of the occupied population in farming or farm processing between 1926 and 1936.[140] This was despite enormous increases in output, massive joblessness, and strenuous attempts by the Unemployment Board to put workers "on the land". Tractors, trucks, milking machines, shearing plants, and electric motors were permitting a much greater production per person employed. Clearly a policy of suppressing the domestic economy in favour of exports meant condemning more workers to unemployment.

Some blame for the slowness of recovery can probably be attached to the banks. Despite improving export receipts, their ratio of advances to deposits continued to remain historically very low even after the Reserve Bank had taken over their accumulation of surplus sterling funds.[141] The ratio actually fell during 1936. Borrowing might have been given greater encouragement by an earlier and more substantial reduction in fixed-deposit interest and the overdraft rates demanded of the average borrower. However, the banks were commercial institutions and they were already experiencing a severe squeeze on their profits, partly as the result of previous cuts in interest on advances.[142] The National Bank, in particular, appears to have been hard pressed.[143] Above all, the effect

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140. The proportion of the male workforce employed full-time in farming increased from 27.8% in 1926 to 28.5% in 1936. Census, 1926, Vol.IX, p.41; Census, 1936, Vol.X, p.33.

141. NZYB, 1937, p.560.

142. Moore and Barton, op.cit., p.32b, 65, 206.

143. R.Holder, Bank of New South Wales, Vol.2: 1894-1970, Sydney, 1970, p.814.

of "cheap money" on levels of investment is probably limited in a situation where profitable opportunities are few. The onus was on the government to increase its spending, borrow some of the accumulated bank funds, and give some incentive for productive private investment.

Yet it was only during 1936 that government policies began to reinforce the export-led recovery to any great extent. The Coalition had been planning further increases in public spending following the 1935 election,[144] but its plans were certainly more modest than the reality of Labour's first year in office. Restored pay and pension levels, increases in unemployment relief, a shorter working week, more state advances, and a considerable expansion of public works all assisted reflation. Government borrowing for development increased,[145] but much of the rise in expenditure was financed through taxation on those with middle and higher incomes.[146] Imports climbed rapidly with the rising standard of living and aspects of the new technology were prominent amongst them.[147] With no import or exchange controls the surplus began to melt away. Nevertheless, the benefits of recovery were spread much more widely through the community.

The depression resulted from a failure by the major economic powers to adjust to the changes that tecnhology and

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144. Sutch, op.cit., p.229.

145. £4.6 million in 1936-37. NZYB, 1939, p.501.

146. NZYB, 1938, p.557.

147. Whereas the value of merchandise imports as a whole increased by 55% between 1935 and 1937, that of imports of motor cars rose by 74%, motor spirit by 67%, wireless apparatus by 90% and electrical machinery and equipment by 104%. NZYB, 1939, p.908, 920-22.

war had wrought. This failure was perhaps inevitable, especially given the rapidity of the change. Faced with the breakdown of the international system of trade and finance, small states needed import controls and internal reflation to reduce its impact on their citizens.[148] A number pursued such policies with success.

In New Zealand, however, they were not applied in a sustained or integrated manner up to the end of 1936. The United Government did use state spending to maintain economic activity between 1928 and 1931. But it failed to move on to greater protection and deliberate deficit spending when confronted by the closure of overseas money markets.

United turned instead to deflation, and linked up with the forces of financial conservatism. Together they cut state spending further and actually moved to reduce protection. They saw an increase in export returns as the only avenue to recovery, and eventually attempted to hasten it with a devaluation. This did little to restore the severely depressed internal economy as the government maintained its rigorously deflationary policies. Furthermore, devaluation was accompanied by measures which tended both to dampen down any rise in activity outside the export sector, and to encourage the

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148. "In the 1930s there was a world-wide revulsion against foreign lending, the multilateral trade and payments system had collapsed and in its place were bilateral agreements, very high tariffs and exchange control...In these circumstances, reliance on a recovery in world trade for domestic revival was foolish. Most of the successful recoveries from the depression achieved in the 1930s were accomplished by insulating the economy from instability and depression abroad". Richardson, op.cit., p.6.

accumulation of export receipts in London accounts. Because of these measures, the attitude of the government to local manufacturing, and a high level of farmer indebtedness, the considerable rise in export earnings from the autumn of 1933 brought only a slow domestic recovery.

From the end of 1935 the Labour Government promoted this recovery with a strongly reflationary policy. Yet it too mistook the depth of the problems that new technology and the international crisis had created for a technically and socially advanced nation dependent on primary exports. In 1938 Labour was faced with renewed deflation as a result of a downturn in the world economy. Only then did they shelve the dream of Imperial free trade and move to strict import and exchange controls.

Originally the product of technological change and war, the world depression became a massive economic and social influence in its own right. This was particularly so in New Zealand, a country greatly dependent on overseas trade and led by men thoroughly bound up in that dependence.

PART II

CHAPTER THREE

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Christchurch and Canterbury as a whole suffered a disproportionate economic decline during the early thirties, and their recovery lagged behind that of the rest of New Zealand. In the 1936 census the Christchurch Urban area recorded 14.5% unemployment amongst its male workforce, as against 11.8% in Auckland, 9.5% in Wellington, and 9.3% in Dunedin.[1] Roughly the same pattern prevailed in the provincial statistics, with 10.4% male unemployment in Canterbury, 6.8% in Auckland, 7.7% in Wellington and 6.7% in Otago.[2] Similarly, factory production by value reached a low of 65 (1925-26 = 100) in Canterbury in 1932-33, compared to the national low-point of 82 in 1931-32.[3] By 1935-36 New Zealand factory production had recovered to 108, but that of Canterbury only to 84. Auckland had attained 127, Wellington 111, and Otago 91. Some vital statistics reinforce this impression. Comparison of Canterbury's male 21-29 age cohort in 1936 with that of 11-19 in 1926 yields a figure of 91.1%.[4] This compares with 105.1% for Auckland,

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1. Census, 1936, Vol. X, p.iv. The unemployed totals used for these calculations comprised 17 "Persons wholly unemployed on sustenance, or part-time relief work".

2. Ibid, Vol. XI, p.ii.

3. CSO, Factory Production, 1926-31; Factory and Building Production, 1932-36, "Production by Provincial Districts". Tramways production figures have been deducted from the totals prior to 1932 in order to make them comparable with the totals for subsequent years.

4. Census, 1926, Vol. III, p.20-21; Census, 1936, Vol. IV, p.9-10.

102.4% for Wellington, and 91.3% for Otago.[5] Clearly many of the most mobile sections of Canterbury's population had given it a vote of no-confidence with their feet.

Comparable regional variations in the impact of the depression have been noted overseas; the generally stagnant north and the developing south-east in Britain,[6] New England versus California in the United States.[7] In most cases it was regional differences in resources and forms of economic activity which caused these differential rates of decline and recovery. Some industries, such as heavy engineering, suffered more from the effects of the international crisis than others; some, such as gold-mining, were actually encouraged by it. Generally speaking, industries associated with recent technological change, including motor engineering, electricity generation, electrical appliances and synthetic fibres, experienced less difficulty. In the case of Canterbury and its principal city, the structure of the local economy meant that both the depression and new technology operated to its comparative detriment.

Primary production was extremely important in the economy of this region, not least through the activity it engendered within Christchurch. Wool and grain stores, freezing works, flour mills, and woolscouring plants were

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5. The loss from Otago is probably exaggerated. The number of visitors to the Dunedin Exhibition at the time of the 1926 Census swelled the population of the city by around five per cent. Those visitors included many parties of schoolchildren. Consequently the carry-over of the 11-19 cohort was almost certainly underestimated for Otago and slightly overestimated in other regions, notably Canterbury, the most accessible to Dunedin. Census, 1926, Vol. XVII, p.16.

6. H.W.Richardson, Economic Recovery in Britain, 1932-39, London, 1967, Ch. 11.

7. G. Gunderson, A New Economic History of America, New York, 1976, p.471.

large employers in and around the urban area, and much of the work of the railways and the port was based on seasonal primary production. Furthermore, the city dominated the manufacture of farm machinery in New Zealand, producing roughly two-thirds of the country's output by value in 1926.[8] Stock and station agencies were also major employers in Christchurch, and some local retailers had substantial country sales. City law and accountancy firms, banks, insurance companies, and other service enterprises drew much of their business from the rural hinterland.

At the top and the bottom of the social scale the land provided considerable income for people normally or frequently resident in the city. The big houses of the north-west and along the hills accommodated a number of "runholders" and "sheep-farmers".[9] Together with "mixed farmers" they constituted a higher proportion of the adult male workforce than in the other main urban areas - although Dunedin came close.[10] More significantly, a larger part of the workforce in Christchurch relied upon seasonal and general farm work than in the other main centres, and the city was a convenient haven for casual labour during the winter. Farm labourers

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8. CSO, Factory Production, 1926, p.81.

9. G.A. Stone (Ed.), Canterbury, Nelson, Marlborough and Westland Directory, Dunedin, 1934.

10. In 1936 there were roughly 40 such individuals per ten thousand in the male workforce in the Christchurch Urban Area, compared with 36 in Dunedin 22 in Auckland and 15 in Wellington. Census, 1936, Vol. X, p.64, and ibid., p.iv, for male workforce totals. In 1926 the relationship between the proportions of the workforce in these occupations in the three largest centres was similar. However, that in Dunedin was extraordinarily high - apparently because wealthy farmers were amongst those best able to travel to the Exhibition. Census, 1926, Vol. IX, p.55.

constituted 2.2% of the Christchurch workforce in 1936, compared with 1.4% in Dunedin, 1.3% in Auckland and 0.6% in Wellington.[11] Other categories of farm employees which were divided according to urban areas in the census showed a similar concentration in Christchurch. Furthermore, the proportion of "labourers, not otherwise defined" was highest here, at 6.5%, compared with 5.6% in Auckland, 5.4% in Dunedin and 4.6% in Wellington. Many such labourers would have been involved in farm work during the season.

However, there were a number of differences between primary production in Canterbury and that in the other major provinces, and these differences were to affect significantly the impact of the depression in the area. Most importantly, the description of New Zealand at the time as "one gigantic cow-yard"[12] was no-where so misleading as in Canterbury, where less than two per cent of the male workforce were dairy-farmers in 1926.[13] The low rainfall of the plains, and the rugged nature of the mountains to the west and north had made the province largely inhospitable to dairying. On the other hand, it had proved extremely suitable for sheep-farming and cropping. In 1925 wool still made up approximately 35% of the value of Canterbury's farm production, followed by meat (mainly sheepmeat) with about 33% and agriculture with around 23%.[14] Only Wellington Province had a similar

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11. Census, 1936, loc.cit. A remarkably large number of farm labourers were also in Dunedin at the time of the Exhibition. Census, 1926, loc.cit.

12. Quoted from unspecified source in K. Sinclair, A History of New Zealand, London, 1980, p.261.

13. Census, 1926, Vol. IX, p.36. Even Hawke's Bay had a higher proportion, approximately 3.5%.

14. Calculated from CSO, Trade and Shipping, 1925, "Details of Exports" (figures for wool); Factory Production, 1926, "Meat-freezing and Meat-preserving"; Agricultural and Pastoral Production, 1926, "Value of Crops".

dependence on sheep-farming, but it was less reliant on wool. In no other major province was dairying such an insignificant part of farm production as in Canterbury. Other forms of primary production which were important in other regions, timber-milling, gold and coal mining, were also relatively negligible here.

Such a structure of primary production had a number of drawbacks during the depression. In the first place, the price of wool fell considerably further than the prices for other primary products. From a high-point of 100 in 1925, greasy wool fell to 26.5 in 1932, scoured wool to 34, and slipe to 31.5.[15] L.R.C. Macfarlane, a prominent North Canterbury sheep-farmer, was moved to a little colourful exaggeration in 1932:

> Wool used to be an important factor in New Zealand's economic life. Now it is only a by-product of an animal called the sheep and the trouble is to get rid of that by-product so that we can get at the meat, which is really worth something.[16]

Butter and cheese, on the other hand, peaked in 1924 and reached their nadir at 53 and 58 respectively in 1935. From their high-point in 1925, the lowest average prices for sheepmeats fell in between those for wool and dairy products, at 53 for lamb in 1933 and 39 for mutton in 1932. Agriculture's low-points extended from wheat at 64 in 1932-33 (1925-26 = 100) to oats at 45 in the same year.[17] The very low figure for oats was as significant as the comparatively

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15. CSO, Trade and Shipping, 1926-36. Figures calculated by dividing value by volume.

16. Sun, 28 July, 1932.

17. CSO, Agricultural and Pastoral Production, 1926-36, loc.cit. and "Total Yields of Crops". Figures calculated by dividing value by yield.

good one for wheat, since in Canterbury the production of oats and oaten chaff was roughly as important economically as that of wheat. Besides dropping further than other returns for farm products during the early 'thirties, the price of wool had a fitful recovery, plummeting halfway back to the levels of 1932-33 during 1935.

Then again, wool, unlike most meat and dairy products, could be stored relatively cheaply and without a great loss of quality. The weight of wool exported from New Zealand actually declined following the drop in prices in 1930, contrary to the general rule here and overseas that farm production rose to compensate for falling returns.[18] The dominion's wool stockpile grew from 19.5 million pounds in 1928 to 117.9 million pounds in 1932.[19] By 1934 it had fallen sharply to 49.8 million pounds, but nearly doubled with the fall in the wool-price in the following year. On the other hand, the dairy industry could only counter falling returns by raising production, and the volume of its exports doubled between the years of highest and lowest prices.[20]

Furthermore, purchasers of wool could reduce their need for expensive credit and take advantage of lower processing charges elsewhere by shipping more wool in its greasy rather than scoured form. Between 1926 and 1931 the number of bales of scoured wool exported dropped from 59,893

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18. Richardson, op.cit., p.1.

19. NZYB, 1937, p.361. See also editorial in Star, 31 January, 1931.

20. CSO, Factory Production, 1923-31; Factory and Building Production, 1932-35. "Butter, Cheese and Condensed Milk Factories".

to 38,849.[21] Exports from Lyttelton were particularly affected, falling from over twenty to under nine thousand bales. Such cutbacks in processing, coming on top of the drop in raw wool prices, reduced the value of production from Canterbury's woolscouring plants from £1,321,000 in 1925-26 to £186,000 in 1931-32.[22] Between 1926 and 1932 all six fellmongeries in Christchurch closed down.[23] On the other hand, traders in meat and dairy produce were not able to reduce processing substantially, so activity and employment tended to be better maintained in their industries. The number of jobs in the wool-scouring and fellmongery industry dropped by almost forty per cent between 1926 and 1932, compared with a fall of under four per cent in employment in dairy-factories and an increase of four per cent in jobs in meat-works.[24]

It seems likely that the socio-economic structure of farming in Canterbury also tended to retard the recovery of its consumer industries compared with those in provinces where average farm incomes were lower. A high proportion of Canterbury landowners were sheep-farmers,[25] a group with a mean income well above other categories of farmer.[26] It

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21. CSO, Trade and Shipping, 1926-31, "Details of Exports".

22. CSO, Factory Production, 1926; Factory and Building Production, 1932, "Wool-scouring and Fellmongery".

23. Sun, 13 January, 1932.

24. CSO, op.cit, loc.cit., "Butter...", and "Meat-freezing and Meat-preserving".

25. Twenty-seven per cent of agricultural farmers in 1936, compared with the national average of 22%. A further 29% were "mixed farmers" (normally mixed sheep and cropping) compared with the dominion proportion of 14%. Census, 1936, Vol.X, p.60.

26. The mean income of sheep-farmers who described themselves as employers in the 1926 Census was over £364, compared with £270 in the case of dairy-farmer employers. The majority of sheep-farmers were employers; the majority of dairy-farmers were not. In the 1936 Census the incomes of the two groups of employers were probably proportionately wider apart, at 229 and 146 respectively. Census, 1926, Vol.XI, p.8,11; 1936, Vol.XII, p.12, 22.

appears fair to conclude that consequently a smaller proportion of the increased farm income from devaluation, reduced interest rates and higher export prices went on the purchase of locally-produced consumer goods than in dairying regions. Much of this money appears to have flowed on instead to the repayment of debt and even the acquisition of more farmland, presumably with money borrowed at the new lower rates. The value of mortgages discharged in Canterbury increased by 123% in the 1933-34 financial year, compared with a rise of 57% in Auckland.[27] Within two years of devaluation and rising returns, most of the areas of the country dominated by sheep-farming had shown similar disproportionate increases. In effect, this meant that in Canterbury a greater proportion of the income transferred from urban workers to farmers through higher food prices and sales tax was going to generally wealthy individual and institutional mortgagees. Similarly, whereas the national number of sales of country property rose by less than one per cent between the last quarter of 1932 and that of 1933, in Canterbury the increase was over twelve per cent.[28] Finally, it is likely that wealthier individuals such as sheep-farmers preferred the more expensive imported merchandise to locally produced goods. Certainly prestigious emporiums such as Ballantyne's sold large amounts of imports in comparison with the stores such as Armstrong's and Miller's which catered mostly for working people.

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27. NZYB, 1936, p.575.

28. CSO, Monthly Abstract of Statistics, November 1932 to January 1933 and November 1933 to January 1934, "Land Sales".

With heavy unemployment, little rural trade union activity and some farm labour subsidised by the Unemployment Board, it seems that little of the farm employers' additional income went to their employees up to 1936. The mean income of farm workers, already low in 1925-26 at £107, was amongst those most substantially reduced by 1935.[29]. It had fallen by 44%, despite the fact that the later figure was supposed to include an allowance for the value of board and keep,[30] something provided more often to rural workers than most other groups. In dairy-farming, on the other hand, labour was normally provided by the farmer himself and his family,[31] and their per capita income was frequently little above that of farm workers.[32] Consequently any growth in their income due to increased production, increased prices or mortgage relief was more likely to go on marginal improvements in their standard of living, to the benefit of local traders and manufacturers.

Partly because of the need to employ workers, the operation of most sheep-farms was more capital-intensive than dairying. However, like cropping, sheep-farming provided only a few payouts per year, thus necessitating the use of credit for long periods. But credit remained expensive until well into 1933. Dairy payments were typically by

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29. Census, 1926, Vol.XI, p.18; 1936, Vol.XII, p.88. The 1926 figure has been calculated more precisely than the "approximate mean" given in the Census table.

30. Ibid, p.i.

31. In 1936, only forty per cent of dairy-farmers were employers, compared with sixty per cent of sheep-farmers. Ibid, p.12, 22.

32. In 1935 a quarter of dairy-farmers working on their own had incomes between £52 and £103, along with a third of farm labourers. Ibid, loc.cit.

monthly butterfat cheque, and therefore the limited extra working capital needed to increase production on dairy farms was more readily available to "cow cockies".

Finally, farming in the new dairying and fat lamb areas of the country was often little beyond the pioneering stage. This meant that increases in production were still possible with the application of simple technology and little capital, plus a lot of hard work. It also meant that a higher proportion of the farming population was endeavouring to pay off first farms, usually on mortgage. In most cases this proved an effective, if cruel, spur to greater production which led in turn to more employment for cream-collectors and factory workers. In Canterbury, large-scale irrigation and big quantities of fertiliser were needed to achieve similar increases in output. Moreover, its farmers appear to have been generally well-established and less burdened by mortgage debt than those in the newer, developing areas of the country. Informed contemporary observers believed this to be so,[33] and their view is supported by the record of registrations of country mortgages under the Land Transfer Act. In the era of record farmland prices between 1919 and 1926, a gross amount of £39.3 million had been secured on such mortgages in Auckland, compared with £25.5 million in Canterbury.[34] In 1914 a total of £18.2 million had been registered on mortgages under the Land Transfer Act in Auckland, compared with £22.5 million in Canterbury.

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33. J.B. Condliffe, The Welfare State in New Zealand, Westport (Conn.), 1975, p.14.

34. AJHR, H3, 1920-26.

In 1926 the respective amounts were £63.0 million and £43.9 million.[35]

In addition, the sales of several of Canterbury's established farm products, barley, small seeds, potatoes, and onions, suffered severely from the depression.[36] The usage of barley fell with the consumption of beer, and shipments of seeds to the North Island and to Australia dropped as their farmers economised. The previously significant trans-Tasman trade in onions and potatoes virtually disappeared as Canberra sought to protect its own producers, hard-hit by the economic crisis.

Nor had Canterbury the climate to stake much of a claim in the fruit bonanza or the tobacco borassa of the early 'thirties. The value of the dominion's fruit exports more than doubled between 1926 and 1932, despite a fall in prices.[37] Shipments from Lyttelton increased very little as Canterbury lacked the sunshine of Central Otago, Nelson and Hawke's Bay. Most of the large new export trade consisted of apples bound for Britain and its foundations had been built up over a long period not least through the provision of a subsidy by the Reform Government.[38] Reform was evidently prepared to compromise on its opposition to "artificially supported" industries when they involved sending more farm produce "Home".

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35. NZYB, 1915, p.546; Ibid., 1927, p.757.

36. Actual production totals for most of these crops can be found in CSO, Agricultural and Pastoral Production, 1926-36; exports and coastal shipments from Lyttelton in CSO, Trade and Shipping, 1926-36. Convenient summaries of national exports can be found in NZYB, 1932, p.246; Ibid., 1937, 183-84.

37. Ibid, loc.cit.

38. One penny per pound weight from 1924. Altered to 11/- and 7/- per case in 1927. Limited to new markets in 1935. Ibid., 1929, p.466; 1932, p.384; 1936, p.345.

However, there was also substantial growth in the local production and consumption of stone and citrus fruit during the early 'thirties. These crops were concentrated in Central Otago and North Auckland respectively. Much of the increased production of stone-fruit was canned, thus providing another industry employing labour in fruit-growing regions. The weight of fruit processed in this way increased from 6,177 cwt. in 1926-27 to 26,951 cwt. in 1932-33.[39] During 1933 sales of New Zealand-grown citrus and stone-fruit was further encouraged by an embargo on much of the import trade from Australia in these products. This was imposed in retaliation for the Australian embargo on some New Zealand products, including potatoes.[40] In regional economic terms the government was responding to the harm that the Australians were doing to Canterbury in a way which assisted economic activity in North Auckland and Central Otago.

The popularity of tobacco-growing in New Zealand resulted from developments during the depression. During 1931 the import duty on tobacco was increased by half, and there was a further increase in 1933.[41] These measures were aimed primarily at raising government revenue in order to "balance the budget". In addition, there was a significant barrier created against imports from the United States - the major source of the leaf consumed in New Zealand - by the devaluation

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39. NZYB, 1937, p.744.

40. Press, 28 December, 1932; 9, 20 March, 1933.

41. NZYB, 1934, p.239.

of sterling. This carried the New Zealand pound down with it and would have continued to exert a protective influence until the latter half of 1933.[42] The area producing tobacco in the dominion swelled from twenty-eight acres in 1924 to over two thousand in 1933.[43] Canterbury's frosts ruled out any extensive local production, although some attempts were made to grow this crop in the New Brighton area as an unemployment relief project under the auspices of the Returned Servicemen's Association.[44]

The lack of any significant gold-mining in Canterbury also gave the province a comparative handicap in facing the depression. The price of gold was greatly increased by the unsettled world economic situation in the early 'thirties. Its rise was particularly strong following the decision to take sterling off the gold standard in 1931, and the American dollar's depreciation against gold during 1933. From £4 8s. in 1930, the approximate average London price per ounce rose to £6 9s. in 1932, £8 12s in 1934, and £8 17s in 1935. It peaked at £9 5s 11d in March, 1935.[45] This boom sparked the floatation of a large number of gold-mining companies in New Zealand. It also persuaded the Unemployment Board to subsidise parties of prospectors and the unemployment of gold-miners. In 1933-34 over £198,000 was provided by the

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42. C.P. Kindleberger, The World in Depression, 1929-39, London, 1973, p.162, 179, 202, 217.

43. NZYB, 1930, p.457; 1937, p.355.

44. Press, 6 December, 1932.

45. NZYB, 1938, p.474.

Board under these schemes.[46] Private investment in mines and dredges was immense, and engendered considerable engineering work in gold-bearing regions. For example, eleven dredges were built in Westland, Otago, and Southland between 1933 and early 1936, and four more were then under construction.[47] Several were very large, electrically-powered vessels. There was some increase in gold production during this period, but the major effect was to divert risk capital, subsidies, and enterprise towards the auriferous areas of the country. No doubt Canterbury benefited from some of the engineering work, and some returns would have been remitted from miners, companies, and company employees. However, these would have been small in comparison to the vast investment of capital from Christchurch. Gold prospecting and mining companies provided almost a third of the £3.9 million in shares registered in the city between 1931 and 1936.[48] In 1933 the proportion was 61%. Not all the capital would have been raised in Canterbury, although the principal shareholders were usually local. Furthermore, Canterbury investors doubtless bought many shares in companies registered in other centres.

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46. Ibid, 1936, p.650-1. Some assistance was provided for an unsuccessful expedition to the headwaters of the Rakaia, where gold-mining had been carried out under extreme difficulties some decades earlier. Press, 17 March, 1933.

47. NZYB, 1937, p.405. Some private operations were undertaken on the beaches near the mouth of the Rakaia. Sun, 25 May, 1932.

48. Calculated from notices published in Mercantile Gazette, 1931-36, "Companies Registered".

The new electrical and motor technology also served on balance to draw development in the area of primary production away from Canterbury. In particular, it assisted the growth of farm production in the North Island, notably in the southern portion of Auckland Province. This region, embracing the Waikato, Hauraki Plains, and the Bay of Plenty, had by far the greatest expansion of dairy production in the 'twenties and 'thirties. The production of butter in Auckland Province increased by 149% between 1926 and 1936; that of cheese by 31%. The respective increases in national production were 118% and 16%.[49] Such growth depended to a very considerable extent on the spread of small internal combustion engines, milking machines, and motor lorries.

The effect of these innovations can be seen most clearly in the production of butter. Butter is a more perishable commodity than cheese, requiring the rapid delivery of fresh cream or whole milk to the factory. Nevertheless, it was commanding a large British market which was growing more quickly than that for cheese. Mechanical cream-separators driven by oil, petrol and kerosene, appeared in New Zealand round the turn of the century. They gradually obviated the need for farmers to transport large quantities of milk to separating stations,[50] enabling them to milk more cows and giving them more time for developmental work.

The advent of the cream-collection lorry after the Great War then created much larger catchment areas for butter

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49. CSO, Factory Production, 1926; Factory and Building Production, 1936, "Butter, Cheese and Condensed-milk Factories".

50. W.M. Hamilton, The Dairy Industry in New Zealand, DSIR Bulletin 89, Wellington, 1944, p.39.

factories, contributing to an increase in average annual output from 187 tons in 1920 to 1,260 tons in 1938.[51] Motor transport thus economies of scale in the industry, and the price advantage of butterfat production to many more farmers at a time of continuously falling prices for dairy products. Like the mechanical separator, it gave the farmer more working time. Of all the major dairying areas, Auckland had by far the highest expenditure on cream collection per ton of product. In 1927 dairy factories in the province spent £15,889 on cream and milk collection per million pounds worth of product.[52] Wellington was the next highest, with £11,986. Auckland's spectacular success in increasing dairy production rested firmly on rubber tyres.

On the other hand, given the marginal nature of so many of the farms contributing to the dairy factories, it seems unlikely that they could have supported the extra labour required to increase production without cheap mechanical energy. With electric current available from Horahora, and later Arapuni, southern Auckland dairy-farmers were well-placed to take advantage of electricity. In 1927 there were over three thousand electrical milking machines in Auckland province, and almost nine thousand in 1936.[53] In addition oil fuels continued to spread mechanised milking beyond the power lines, and now such fuels were considerably

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51. Ibid, p.69-70. A similar rationalisation occurred in cheese production, with numbers of factories dropping from 402 in 1918 to 326 in 1929, despite a big growth in output.

52. CSO, Factory Production, 1927, "Butter, Cheese, and Condensed-milk Factories".

53. AJHR, 1927, D1, p.119; 1936, D1, p.111.

cheaper.[54] Auckland led the country during the mid-'twenties in the overall ratio of milking-machines to persons engaged in dairying, and its lead increased during the depression. In 1926 Auckland Province had one milking-machine to every 1.69 persons employed in dairy-farming, as against the national average of 1.77. By 1936 the respective ratios were 2.76 and 2.87.[55]

The new technology also assisted the disproportionate growth in lamb production in the North Island. Lamb exports from Auckland grew by 205% between 1926 and 1936, compared with a rise of 52% from Wellington and 27% from Lyttelton.[56] As with dairying, motor transport in back-country areas contributed much to this rapid growth, carrying fertilizers, farm supplies, and sometimes stock. Moreover, the operation of back-blocks farms was in many cases partly financed by the daily production of a few cans of cream, mechanically separated, and deposited at the farm-gate for collection by lorry.[57] This option was not open to many farmers in Canterbury, where the climate was generally dry and such collections few.

The combination of lorry collections, milking-machines and mechanical cream-separators permitted the expansion of certain sidelines to dairy-farming and thus helped to keep

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54. See above, Table 1.1, p.46.

55. CSO, Agricultural and Pastoral Production, 1926, p.50; 1936, p.41. Census, 1926, Vol.IX, p.34,36; 1936, Vol.X, p.23,26.

56. CSO, Trade and Shipping, 1926, "Details of Exports"; 1936, "Principal Exports by Ports".

57. P.W. Smallfield, The Grasslands Revolution in New Zealand, Auckland, 1970, p.106.

income flowing into dairying areas during the worst of the depression. The production of pork for export was the most significant of these sidelines. It was based largely on the capacity to feed pigs with skimmed milk, the by-product of cream-separation. From under ninety thousand pounds during the high prices of 1924, the value of exports of frozen pork increased to £467,000 in 1930, and growing production kept the returns up during the early 'thirties. It reached £950,000 in 1933-34 and £1.3 million in 1934-35.[58] Skimmed milk also formed the basis of an expanding export trade in frozen veal. The value of such exports grew from less than ten thousand pounds in the early 'twenties to over eleven times that amount in 1932-33.[59] Finally, the motorised collection of "bobby calves" formed another new source of income for the dairy-farmer.

Much of this vast growth in farm production in the North Island would have been impossible without the upsurge in the use of artificial fertilisers, especially superphosphate, during the same period. Such treatment enabled the climatic advantages of the north for pasture-growth to be realised to a far greater extent. By the beginning of 1935 over forty per cent of the 2.3 million acres of grassland in the Auckland Land District was being top-dressed with artificial fertiliser. This was up from a quarter in 1926. On the other hand, the usage of such fertiliser on the two million acres of grassland in the Canterbury Land District had actually decreased over this period. The proportion treated was under three per cent,

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58. NZYB, 1929, p.303; 1932, p.260; 1938, p.241-42.

59. Ibid, loc.cit.

having peaked at around five per cent in 1929.[60] The spreading of this fertiliser was greatly facilitated by the advent of motor transport - for distribution to and on the farm.[61]

Similarly, the success of fruit-growers in getting their often highly perishable products to railheads and ports appears to have owed much to the spread of motor transport. Certainly they owned and presumably used a large number of lorries in comparison with other farming groups. A survey of the occupations of registered owners of lorries in 1933 suggested that roughly one in five orchardists owned one. This compared with one in nine in the case of dairy-farmers and one in twelve for sheep-farmers.[62] Simultaneously, electricity did much to assist the development of the fruit-canning industry. It was generally based on small factories scattered in rural areas, and required an economical and readily available source of heat and power.

Mechanisation had a roughly comparable effect on methods of production in Canterbury agriculture as it had on dairying elsewhere, although here the agent of change was mainly the tractor. However, in contrast to the situation in the butter-trade, there was no expanding export market for its grain in a world flooded with Australian, North American, and Russian wheat. World production had grown rapidly to counteract the break in price in 1925-26. Moreover, since the war many large consuming nations had sought to encourage and protect their

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60. CSO, Agricultural and Pastoral Production, 1926, 1935, "Grassland Top-dressed".

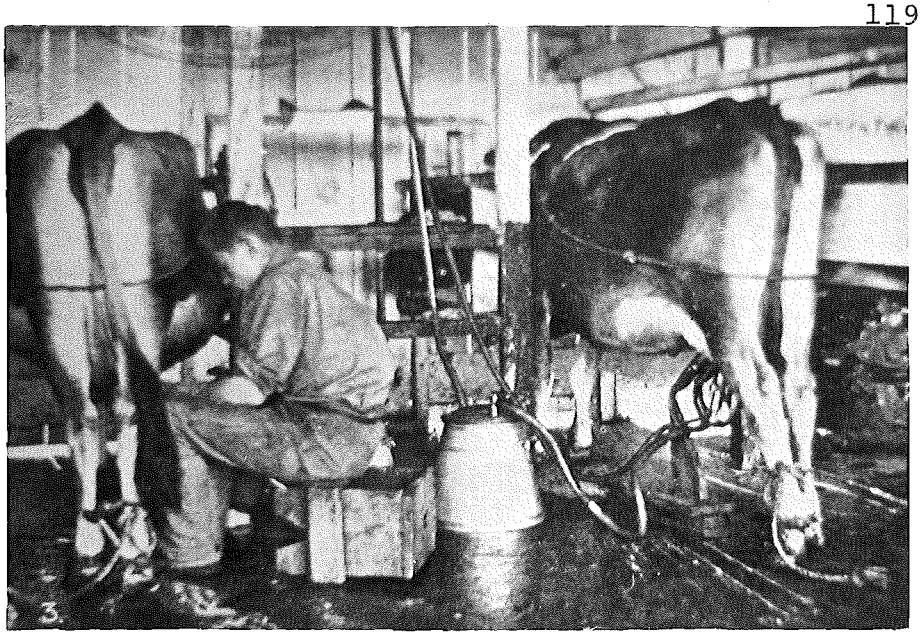
61. Hamilton, op.cit., p.39.

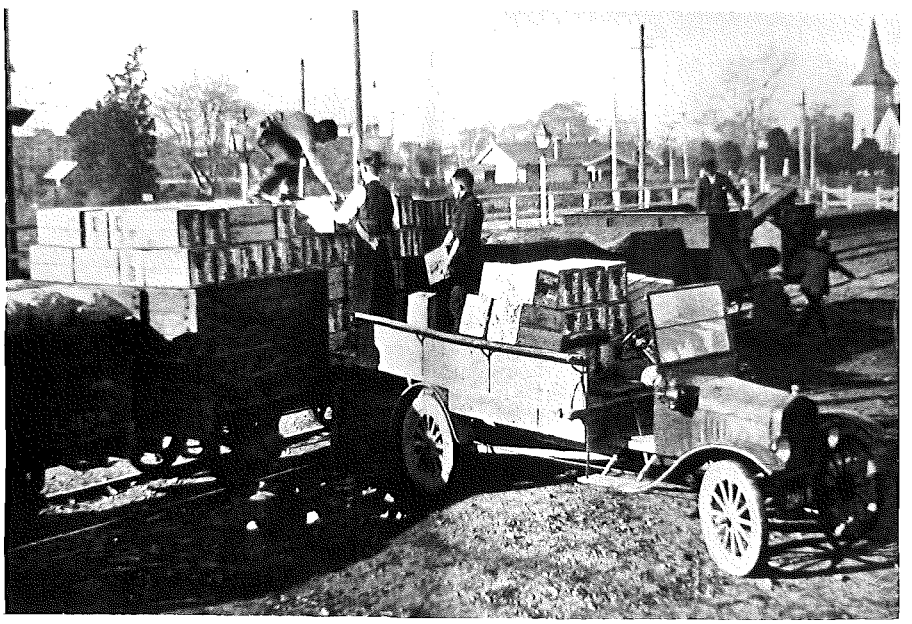
62. Census, 1936, Vol.X, p.60; AJHR, 1933, H40, p.34.

2. Early electrical milking-machine in use at Flock House.
(Weekly Press and Referee, 20 May, 1926.)

3. Traffic delayed by the 1926 Waimakariri flood. Note milk or cream cans on the back of the lorries at left. A more common sight in North Island dairying country.
(Weekly Press and Referee), 20 May 1926.)

4. Transferring apples from motor to rail trucks in North Canterbury. Motor lorries facilitated the development of new orcharding areas.
(Weekly Press and Referee, 27 May, 1926).





own growers for strategic reasons. Attempts by major selling countries to subsidise production and to control the market backfired, and enormous stockpiles developed. Australia furnished the most disastrous example of this with the "success" of the Scullin Government's "Grow More Wheat" campaign in 1929-30.[63] From peak to trough, the world wheat price actually dropped further than that for wool.[64] Moreover, the mountains of grain stacked along Australian railway lines were generally harder and therefore more readily accepted by bakers than New Zealand wheat.

Nevertheless, there was a marked growth in sales of locally produced wheat on the domestic market. A large part of this increase comprised Canterbury grain on consignment to the North Island. The volume of wheat shipped out of Lyttelton to other New Zealand ports increased from 13,877 tons in 1926 to 59,749 tons in 1930. The lowest volume in the 'thirties was 32,942 tons in 1932.[65] Significantly, the principal reason for this expansion was the imposition of sliding-scale duties on imported wheat in 1926. This gave effective protection to local growers as the world price plummeted. The measure was hotly disputed at the time, particularly in Auckland. However, pressure from the growers, who would have been largely government supporters, outweighed urban condemnation of "the dear breakfast table". Paradoxically, the Reform Party succeeded in stimulating a branch of the domestic farming industry by providing it with

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63. G.C. Bolton, A Fine Country to Starve In, Perth, 1972, p.89.

64. Kindleberger, op.cit., p.88-94.

65. CSO, Trade and Shipping, 1926-39, "Shipping by Ports".

the protection that it sought to deny to other local industries. Yet far more workers were engaged in manufacturing than in the wheat industry. Furthermore, there was no obvious alternative employment for them, whereas grain-growers (typically mixed farmers) could normally switch to pastoral production for export.

However, the local market for wheat was still very limited in comparison with the vast export market for dairy products. Consequently the mechanisation of Canterbury agriculture, unlike that of North Island dairying, tended to displace labour. This was probably a strong factor behind the high level of unemployment in the province and its major city. Such unemployment tended to entail lower incomes and therefore less money circulating in the local economy. It may also have contributed substantially to the emigration of young men from the area.

New technology was affecting the market for various farm products as well as the capacity to produce them. For example, the new emphasis on motor power reduced the national demand for oats and oaten chaff, major forms of agricultural production in Canterbury. Shipments of oats to the North Island from Lyttelton averaged over eight thousand tons in the 'twenties, but less than half that in the 'thirties.[66] More importantly, the influence of electric power and motorisation can be seen in the growing demand for butter, fruit and frozen meat in Britain. Electrical refrigerators in stores and butchers' shops, and refrigerated vans were

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66. Ibid, loc.cit.

extending the market for such perishable imports to thousands of suburbs and small towns. Even within New Zealand, many orchardists were greatly assisted by gate-sales to weekend motorists and the improved distribution of fruit to town green-grocers. The latter represented one of the very few areas of small shopkeeping which expanded between 1926 and 1936. Even in hard-hit Christchurch the number of men in that trade increased from 126 to 158.[67] In comparison, the numbers of storekeepers and butchers dropped by almost half, and there were substantial falls in numbers of drapers and chemists.

It is also possible that the growth of the new synthetic fibre industry was having an effect on wool prices by the mid-'thirties. Most forms of rayon did not compete directly with the mainstream woollen textiles such as worsted. However, between 1930 and 1935 there was a dramatic growth in the production of rayon staple, a form which could act as a replacement for wool. By 1936 world output of this synthetic fabric considerably exceeded the volume of wool being purchased by Japan, the sixth largest world market for the natural fleece.[68] Furthermore, the trend of consumption of various fibres in the New Zealand hosiery industry suggests that wool was being displaced to a significant extent by the colder but cheaper and much more glamorous rayon. Between 1930 and 1936 the weight of wool used dropped by almost fifty thousand pounds while that of "silk" (overwhelmingly artificial

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67. Census, 1926, Vol.IX, p.56; 1936, Vol.X, p.66.

68. H.Hodson, Slump and Recovery, 1929-37, London, 1938, p.463.

silk) increased by thirty-three thousand pounds.[69] Cotton consumption in the industry also soared over this period. Taken together, these factors may have moderated the resurgence in wool prices from 1932.

New Zealand produced few raw materials that could be used directly by the motor or electrical industries - rubber, copper or aluminium. However, it was caught up in the international rush to produce tung oil, an important constituent in the hard polymer lacquers being used on motor cars. A thousand acres of the oil-bearing trees had been planted in New Zealand by 1932 and almost five thousand acres by 1935.[70] Towards the end of 1931 there were six companies involved in the industry competing for the few funds seeking productive on the Christchurch Stock Exchange.[71] Unfortunately, climate confined the growing of the tung tree, and therefore the benefits of spending on its establishment, almost exclusively to North Auckland.

While primary production was extremely important to its economy, Christchurch had long been more than just an over-grown farm-service centre. Considerable industrial activity had developed in the city during the eighteen-seventies and eighteen-eighties, based not only on primary processing and farm machinery but also the production of consumer goods for the wider New Zealand market. Christchurch became a leading centre for a diversity of industries. Although clearly the

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69. CSO, Factory and Building Production, 1933-36, "Hosiery Factories".
70. NZYB, 1936, p.334; 1938, p.385.
71. Sun, 3 September, 1931.

third largest province in terms of population, Canterbury had the highest provincial production by value of agricultural and dairying machinery, flour, and biscuits and confectionery. It was second in the output of hosiery, footwear and woollen textiles.[72] Much of this production was sent to the North Island, and some to Australia.[73]

Between 1926 and 1936 the proportion of New Zealand manufacturing production coming from Canterbury declined significantly (Fig. 3.1). However, this decline was far less than the case with farm processing (Fig. 3.2) and the relationship between the two appears to have been far from simple. In particular, local manufacturing actually improved its comparative position in the late 'twenties, at a time when the trend in farm processing was strongly in the opposite direction. Indeed, if the fall in the value of electric current sold in Canterbury due to the drought of 1930 is discounted, the relative position of the province's manufacturing continued to improve until the 1930-31 year. Recovery appears to have had more effect on Canterbury's share of manufacturing output than the slide into depression.

The province's initial success during the late nineteenth century had been based partly on the local availability of raw materials such as wool and flour. However, it had

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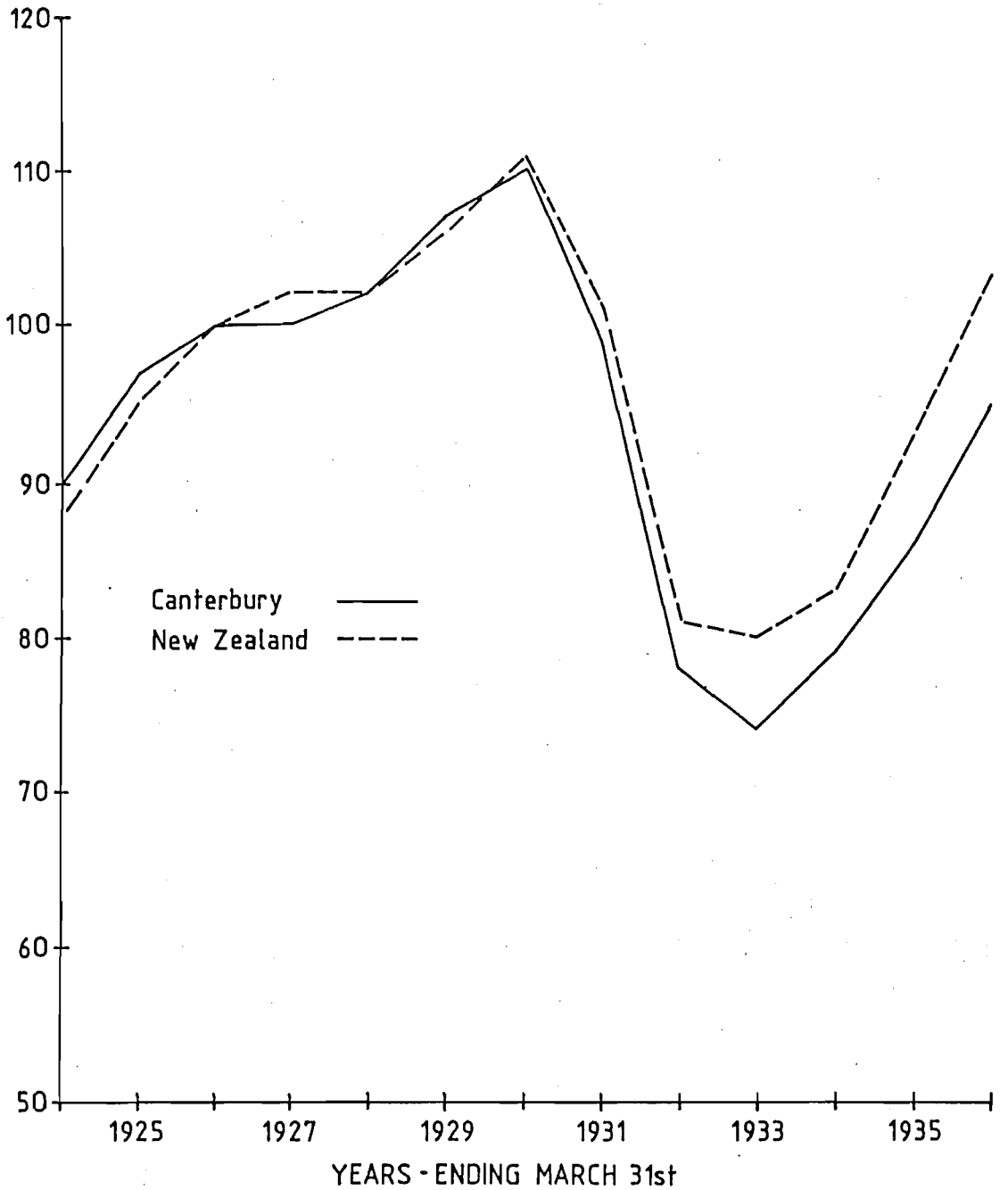
72. CSO, Factory Production, 1926. The position of Canterbury's woollen textile industry cannot be calculated from the figures given and must be inferred from employment figures in Census, 1926, Vol.IX, p.34,36.

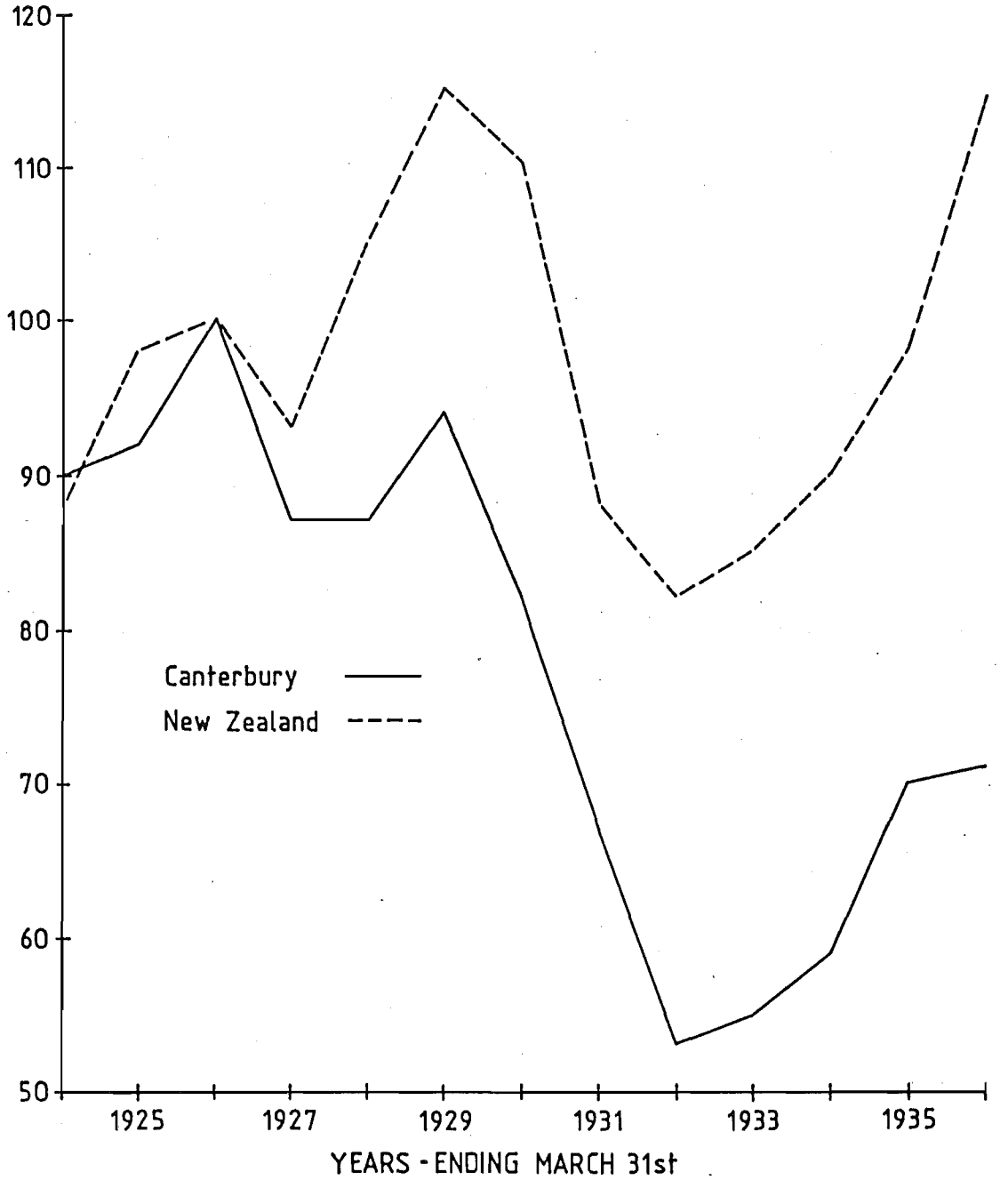
73. B.L. Evans, A History of Farm Implements and Implement Firms in New Zealand, Feilding, 1956, p.89. Unfortunately almost all manufacturers were lumped under the heading "all other goods" in port statistics on coastal shipping. Such "other goods" represented almost half the total tonnage shipped from Lyttelton. CSO, Trade and Shipping, 1926-36.

FIG. 3.1: VALUE OF PRODUCTION FROM MANUFACTURING AND POWER-SUPPLY INDUSTRIES, 1924-36, (1926 = 100)



Source: CSO, Factory Production, 1924-31; Factory and Building Production, 1932-36, "Summary by Provincial Districts", "Meat-freezing and Meat-preserving", "Butter, Cheese and Condensed-milk Factories", and "Wool-scouring and Fellmongery".

FIG. 3.2: VALUE OF PRODUCTION FROM FARM-PROCESSING INDUSTRIES, 1924-36, (1926 = 100)



Source: CSO, Factory Production, 1924-31; Factory and Building Production, 1932-36, "Meat-freezing and Meat-preserving", "Butter, Cheese and Condensed-milk Factories", and "Wool-scouring and Fell-mongery".

rested primarily on the area's early settlement and the flat local topography which had facilitated rail and road communications and created the largest contiguous market in the country on the east coast of the South Island.

The development of dairying and fat lamb farming in the North Island after 1882 gradually altered this balance. By 1926 the population of Auckland Province alone was rivalling that of Canterbury and Otago-Southland combined. Thus manufacturing in the north of the North Island now had ready access to a market of similar size. Furthermore, the opening of the North Island Main Trunk Railway in 1908 presented Auckland and Wellington manufacturers with even greater opportunities. Lacking both a railway to Picton and a rail ferry, South Island industrialists had to rely on comparatively expensive coastal shipping and its associated double-handling to reach what was now the country's largest market. In addition, Christchurch lacked easy road access to its port, which meant that even freight with a local origin or destination had to use rail transport. This involved further handling and was a particular handicap at a time when the flexibility and speed of motor lorries were making road transport increasingly attractive. Thus the city's factories had to cope with the disadvantages of a smaller home market and higher transport costs in competing on northern markets. Such disadvantages became rapidly more significant in the depression's climate of shrinking profit margins, cost-cutting, and falling prices.

The flourmilling and hosiery industries were two very diverse exceptions which tended to prove this rule. As a very necessary <u>quid pro quo</u> for the virtual exclusion of imported

wheat, New Zealand millers were granted protection from imported wheat products. This favoured Canterbury's mills, which were processing the local product, removing waste and adding value, before sending it north. In 1932 the value of production from the province's grain mills was still around 92% of that of 1926, whereas the value of national production was just under 89%.[74] From over ten thousand tons in 1926, the quantity of flour shipped out of Lyttelton to other New Zealand destinations increased virtually every year to a peak of twenty-three thousand tons in 1934. Comparable shipments of pollard and bran almost trebled.[75]

The New Zealand hosiery industry grew even more rapidly during the 'twenties as the price of artificial silk fell.[76] In 1932 the value of national production was still 17% up on 1926, although it had fallen somewhat from the 1930 total. Canterbury's production had increased by 24% over this period and constituted almost half New Zealand's output.[77] The entrepreneurial skills of firms such as Lane, Walker, Rudkin, doubtless contributed much to this success. However, the low-volume, high-value nature of hosiery must have assisted Canterbury firms to remain competitive on northern markets despite the problem of transport.

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74. CSO, Factory Production, 1926; Factory and Building Production, 1932, "Grain Mills".

75. CSO, Trade and Shipping, 1926-36, loc.cit.

76. Between 1921 and 1928 the cost of viscose yarn dropped by approximately 46%. D.C. Coleman, Courtaulds: An Economic and Social History, Vol.II, Oxford, 1969, p.289. The average cost of artificial silk imported into New Zealand fell by forty per cent between 1930 and 1935. CSO, Trade and Shipping, 1930-35, value divided by volume.

77. CSO, Factory Production, 1926; Factory and Building Production, 1932, "Hosiery Factories".

On balance, the shift to new forms of energy in factories also tended to hasten the relative decline of Christchurch industry. During the early 'twenties the city had the advantage of lower electricity charges, based on cheap hydro-generation at Lake Coleridge. This edge was greatly reduced after 1926 with the development of water-power in the North Island, and the Labour city council's decision to reduce charges on domestic rather than industrial supply. Between 1926 and 1930 the price of electricity sold to households was reduced by almost half while the average cost of current to electric motors declined by less than three per cent. Between 1930 and 1935 a further 27% was taken off the price of domestic electricity but only 16% off that for industry. In Auckland, on the other hand, industrial charges were lowered by 27% between 1930 and 1935, more than the reduction in domestic rates over the same period. In Wellington the cost of current to electric motors was reduced by 23%.[78]

Furthermore, the flexibility of electricity reduced the degree of inertia operating against the development of new factories in new areas. Budding entrepreneurs could now have the benefits of machine production far from a railway or gasworks, and without paying for a boiler, a store of coal, or labour to stoke a furnace. A factory could be set up in a small workshop and transferred to a large, permanent building only if the venture proved successful. The advantage

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78. Christchurch City Council, MED Annual Reports, 1926-35; CSO, Local Authorities Handbook, 1931, 1936, Electricity-supply Stations - Units sold, and Electricity-supply Stations - Revenue. Revenue divided by units to yield prices.

of the large, established enterprise was thus reduced, and competition could develop rapidly where it was favoured by other factors such as proximity to the market.

The nature of most of the major industries associated with the new technology also militated against Christchurch. Most of their products, - including electrical home appliances, radios, batteries, motor cars - were consumer goods increasingly directed at a mass market. Factories producing them were therefore typically located as near as possible to the largest population centres. Moreover, these new industries tended to rely on imported components and raw materials, and therefore favoured those cities closest to the main international trade routes. Wellington's growing industrial suburbs of Petone and Lower Hutt appear to have benefited strongly from this trend with the development of the motor assembly industry which followed the establishment of tariff preference for unassembled "completely-knocked-down" imports in 1934.[79] In the short-term, this led to stagnation in the established and dispersed motor-body building industry, and an emphasis on centralised assembly. In 1926 both Christchurch and Auckland had more persons employed in building motor cars than Wellington. By 1936 Wellington had more such employees than the other two centres combined.[80] A similar situation prevailed in fuel distribution. When the British Imperial (later Shell) Oil Company decided to construct two factories in New Zealand to produce tins filled

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79. In 1934 the duty on c.k.d. British cars was set at five per cent, as against fifteen per cent for British cars in other forms. On foreign cars the duties were to be fifty and sixty per cent respectively. NZYB, 1936, p.745.

80. Census, 1926, Vol.IX, p.37; 1936, Vol.X, p.28.

with motor spirit, it chose Wellington and Auckland as their locations.[81]

Whether by direct investment or through franchises, decisions about the siting of such plants were generally made by the international companies which dominated the new technology throughout the world. Such companies as General Motors, Phillips, and I.C.I. did not usually harbour sentimental attachments to areas of far-away countries whose economic leadership lay in the past. And the harsh economic climate of the 'thirties did nothing to discourage such severe rationality.

This point should not be overworked, however. Christchurch held considerable attractions for at least two industries swelled by the new technology - the production of rubber tyres and the assembly of farm machinery. One major overseas tyre firm explored the possibility of setting up a factory in the city in 1931. The availability of land, water, coal, and cheap electricity were all in its favour, but the United government, already on the brink of coalition with the anti-tariff Reform Party, refused to provide the protection the company required.[82] On the other hand, the local operations of international farm machinery companies were already centred in Christchurch because the demand for their products was strongest in agricultural areas.[83] This

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81. Star, 27 January, 1926. The burgeoning cigarette manufacturing industry, which employed a hundred persons in 1926, and seven hundred in 1936, was similarly overwhelmingly based in the North Island, where the main market was, rather than in the South Island, where most of the local leaf was produced. Census, 1926, Vol.IX, p.37,39; 1936, Vol.X, p.28,31.

82. Star, 21 July, 17 August, 1931.

83. Evans, op.cit., p.69-101.

remained true during the 'twenties and 'thirties, when pastoral farming was much less affected by on-farm mechanisation than agriculture.[84] Nevertheless, the growing importance of dairying machinery was gradually drawing interest northwards. For example, the Christchurch firm of Booth, Macdonald and Co., had constructed a new factory in Penrose in 1921.[85] In the year to March, 1926, 21% of New Zealand's production of dairying machinery by value came from Canterbury; in 1931-32 only 8%. Auckland had increased its share from 65% to 81% over the same period. Furthermore, whereas dairying machinery had made up 18% of the value of farm equipment produced in New Zealand in 1925-26, it comprised 23% in 1931-32.[86]

Canterbury was also handicapped in attracting government spending. Such expenditure made an important contribution to economic activity in any region of New Zealand, and especially any city. It became particularly significant during the depression. Initially this was because the United Government raised it to record heights in an attempt to maintain economic activity until the crisis passed. Later its importance was sustained by the still greater decline in spending in the economy generally.

Cuts in wages, salaries, and pensions, sinking-lid policies, and the drying up of state advances probably affected

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84. Smallfield, op.cit., p.120.

85. Evans, op.cit., p.86.

86. CSO, Factory Production, 1926; Factory and Building Production, 1932, "Agricultural and Dairying Machinery".

Christchurch to much the same extent as other cities outside Wellington. Government expenditure on public works, which constituted roughly a third of the total in 1926, was more unevenly distributed and unevenly cut. Canterbury had failed to attract its 'share' of the massive state spending on public works during the 'twenties, and the proportion devoted to the region declined further during the 'thirties. This trend led to the charge of excessive caution on the part of Canterbury local bodies in initiating projects which would attract government subsidies.[87] Certainly the Christchurch City Council, and through it the city's electors, deserve some blame for failing to attract a proportionate share of Unemployment Board subsidies during the 'thirties.[88] That failure would not have helped to promote economic activity within Christchurch when it was badly needed. However, powerful geographical and economic factors were generally much more influential than the failure of local politicians to pursue government money.

For example, the early development of Canterbury and the flatness of its plains had encouraged the construction of a relatively extensive network of railways well before the Great War. Consequently most of the very considerable railway building in the 'twenties took place in the North Island, in regions of rapid farm development. The state's "net investment" in railways in the North Island increased by over seven million pounds between 1926 and 1936. On South

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87. Sun, 29 August, 1929.

88. See Chapter 7.

Island lines it actually decreased.[89]

On the other hand, capital spending by central government in the 'twenties was growing fastest in the areas of land settlement, roading, hydro-generation and forestry.[90] These were also the fields in which expenditure was best maintained during the early 'thirties as the government chose to cut spending least on those public works which it considered economically "reproductive";

> ...it will be my endeavour while looking to the ultimate reduction in the expenditure of capital-moneys to see that such money as is available is spent...on undertakings that promise to return the greatest value to the state. More particularly is it desirable that the public works undertaken in the future are of a character to enable more people than at present to earn their living at rural occupations and in other spheres which will result in increased production.[91]

Continued land development was partly related to the "physiocratic" attitudes of those in power, including Coates. However, it was also firmly based on the opportunities technology had created for export production in back-country areas. Canterbury had few areas with such opportunities and therefore it acquired few new roads.

Much of the state's spending on roading during the interwar period was directed to strengthening and improving existing roads to withstand the impact of motor transport. A Main Highways Board was created in 1922 to subsidise such work with funds from motor licensing and some customs duties. Here Canterbury's flatness, low rainfall, and abundant supplies of shingle again counted against it. Although the Central

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89. AJHR, 1926, D4, p.16; 1936, D2, p.14.

90. NZYB, 1919, p.762; 1930, p.640; 1936, p.438.

91. Statement by Rt.Hon. J.G.Coates, Minister of Public Works on 2 November, 1931, NZPD, Vol.230, p.636.

Canterbury district contributed almost twelve per cent of licence fees in 1926, it attracted only 1.3% of the Board's spending.[92] This disproportion decreased during the late 'twenties as the funds of the board were swelled by the imposition of petrol-tax. However, Central Canterbury's share fell again when it was most needed. In 1933 it was only 3.9%.[93] Moreover, despite the notoriety engendered by industrial trouble at certain of its local projects, including the Lewis Pass and Hilltop jobs, little of the Public Works Department's spending on roads came to Canterbury.[94]

Nor was the province well-suited to the construction of further hydro-electric power stations. After the virtual completion of the Lake Coleridge works in 1926, waterpower development moved north to the Waikato and south to the Waitaki. Finally, Canterbury lacked the vast areas of public "wasteland" that permitted large-scale plantings of exotic forests in southern Auckland during the 'twenties. Stretches of light land were planted, notably at Balmoral, Hanmer, and Eyrewell, but most of the state's large investment in forestry flowed north. In 1935, for example, over eleven thousand acres were planted in the Kaingaroa Forest alone, as against 260 acres in all Canterbury forests.[95]

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92. AJHR, 1926, D1, p.130.

93. AJHR, 1933, D1. p.137.

94. AJHR, 1926-36, D1, Appendix B, Annual Report on Public Works by the Engineer-in-chief.

95. NZYB, 1937, p.389.

In addition to the decline in local state spending on capital works, Canterbury, like most areas of the country outside Wellington, was tending to lose some of its share of general government spending. Many factors associated with the new technology assisted or compelled this centralisation including improved national and international communications and central government involvement in roading, motor licensing, hydro-power, electricity transmission, and broadcasting. There was also a growing demand for the state to deal with the problem of technological unemployment and its consequences. Between 1926 and 1936 the number of public service clerks in New Zealand grew by 33%, but the number in Wellington grew by 43%.[96] The number of the much higher-paid clerical and professional Public Service Officers increased by 87%, with the capital's share going from 31% to 53%. The same factors also applied to major private enterprises, particularly those which did substantial business with government, and to the international firms growing with the new technology. It was increasingly advantageous to them to have the head office for the dominion in Wellington. Therefore the proportion of the country's banking, insurance, shipping, and general clerks in the capital all rose, along with its share of the draughtsmen, accountants, professional engineers, and typists. Furthermore, these occupations showed considerable growth overall, both in numbers and real income.[97]

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96. Census, 1926, Vol.IX, p.55-59; 1936, Vol.X, p.64-67.

97. Ibid., 1926, Vol.XI, p.18-31; 1936, Vol.XII, p.88-104.

Most also had a large measure of security of tenure and earnings. The presence of a high proportion of the working population in such jobs helped to maintain economic activity in Wellington, to some degree at the expense of other regions, which received back a lower proportion of their tax-money.

Thus both the depression and the changes brought about by new technology tended to reduce Christchurch's share of activity in all the major sectors of the economy. They conspired with Canterbury's climate, topography, geology, location, and political status to hold the region back during the 'twenties and 'thirties. However, the region still contained a high proportion of the country's industry and a large section of its population. The productive capacity existed to take advantage of the Labour government's imposition of strict import controls. Moreover, the long-term growth of state spending on health, education, and social welfare must have redressed the balance somewhat in Canterbury's favour. To the degree that the emphasis in government expenditure shifted from economic development towards spending on people, Christchurch stood to gain. The city and its region were to suffer disproportionately again during the depressed conditions of the late nineteen-seventies and early nineteen-eighties. Once again, Christchurch would find itself handicapped in an atmosphere of heightened competition, engendered by international crisis and slow growth in the domestic market. By then the main consumer market was to be even more heavily concentrated on the northern half of the North Island, and Wellington's civil service even larger. Similarly, the areas of major

economic expansion were again elsewhere, in Taranaki, Waikato, and the Bay of Plenty. Compounding this would be a slow movement in government policy towards reduced real spending on social services, more international competition for local industry, and less subsidisation of state services. Both technological change and economic crises have tended to treat Christchurch harshly during the twentieth century.

CHAPTER FOUR

WORK

Work and the lack of work were recurrent themes of the inter-war period in New Zealand as in Europe and America. "Unemployed workers" demanded "work not doles" and politicians of various hues broadly concurred with slogans of their own - "no pay without work" and "he that will not work, neither shall he eat".[1] While the highest levels of joblessness were clearly due to the international economic crisis, the persistent nature of heavy unemployment between the wars betrays more fundamental changes.

In some areas of production, notably in factories, labour-saving electrical and motor technology had become widespread since 1918. In others, particularly transport and agriculture, the decade 1926-36 was to see great innovations. But in either case this period was clearly a time of adjustment to change in the nature and level of employment. At the outset the institutions available to assist

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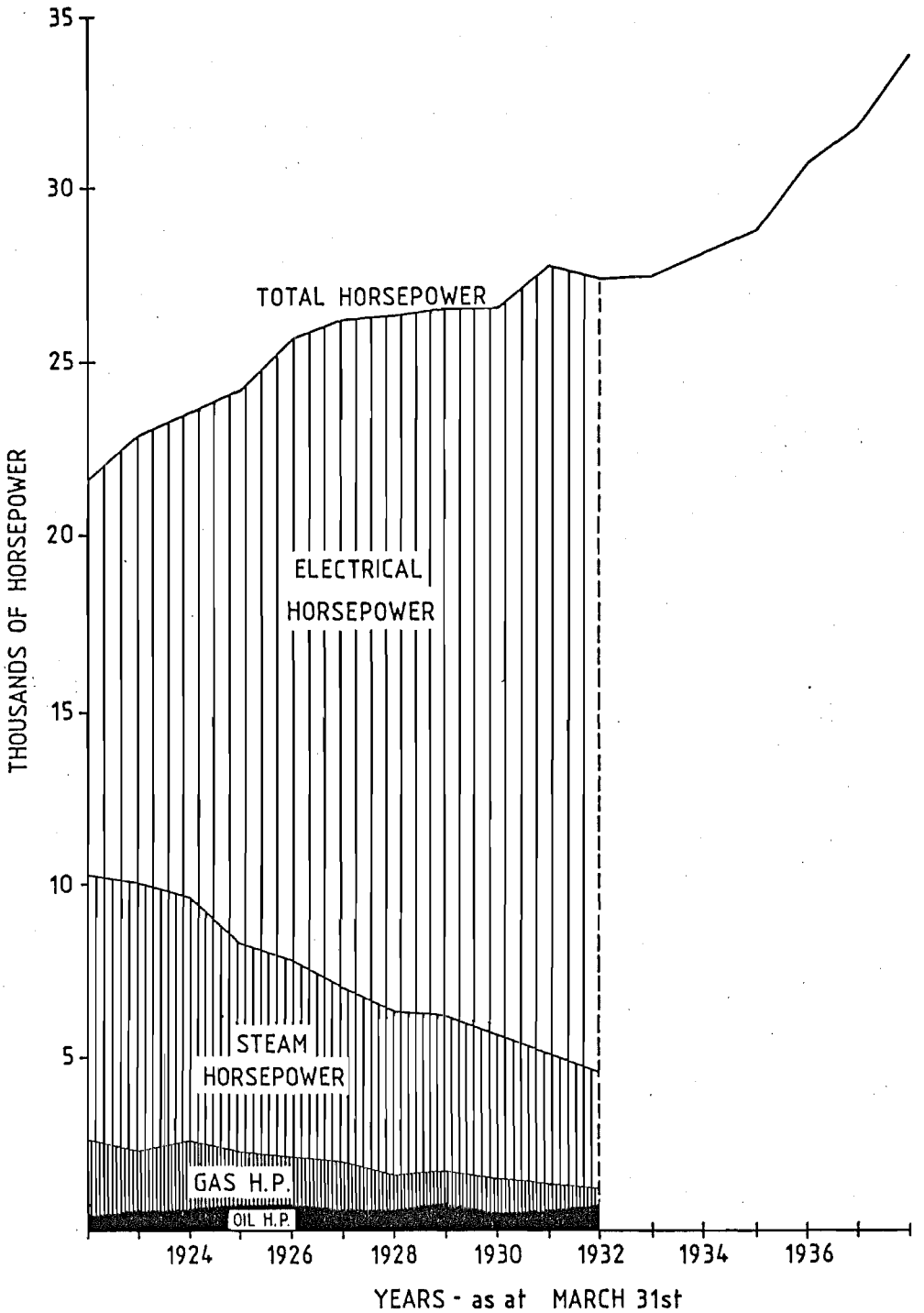
1. The Labour Mayor of Christchurch, J.K. Archer, used this quotation in criticising able-bodied male applicants for charitable aid who refused to work in return for it. Press, 10 September, 1930. Bob Semple, Labour's Minister of Public Works, employed the same expression when attacking militant relief workers who demanded better wages. Star-Sun, 15 January, 1936. A week later he stated that
   > Men who are physically capable of working but who refuse to work have no claim on the nation. In some countries this type of individual is put into a concentration camp where he can infect nobody but himself. A taste of that in this country would not do them any harm. Star-Sun, 23 January, 1936.

the casualties of this change were inadequate and degrading. It was the mass unemployment of the early 'thirties which forced the creation of more socially satisfactory and generous assistance. Attempts to deal with depression unemployment were to serve as vehicles through which the victims of technological change were extended more humane treatment.

By 1926 electricity was powering over ninety per cent of factory engines in use in Canterbury, and was providing almost sixty-nine per cent of the available horsepower (Fig. 4.1). Four years earlier it had supplied fifty-two per cent of the power; five years later it was to provide eighty-three per cent. Most of this extremely rapid growth took place at the expense of competing forms of mechanical power. However, as the increase in the number of factory engines indicates, electricity also fueled a substantial growth in overall factory mechanisation. The versatility and small size of the electric motor enabled it to be used in a variety of operations which had been performed manually previously. Between 1926 and 1936 the rise in factory unemployment in Canterbury was less than four per cent, compared with an increase in the number of factory engines of around sixty-eight per cent (Fig. 4.2).

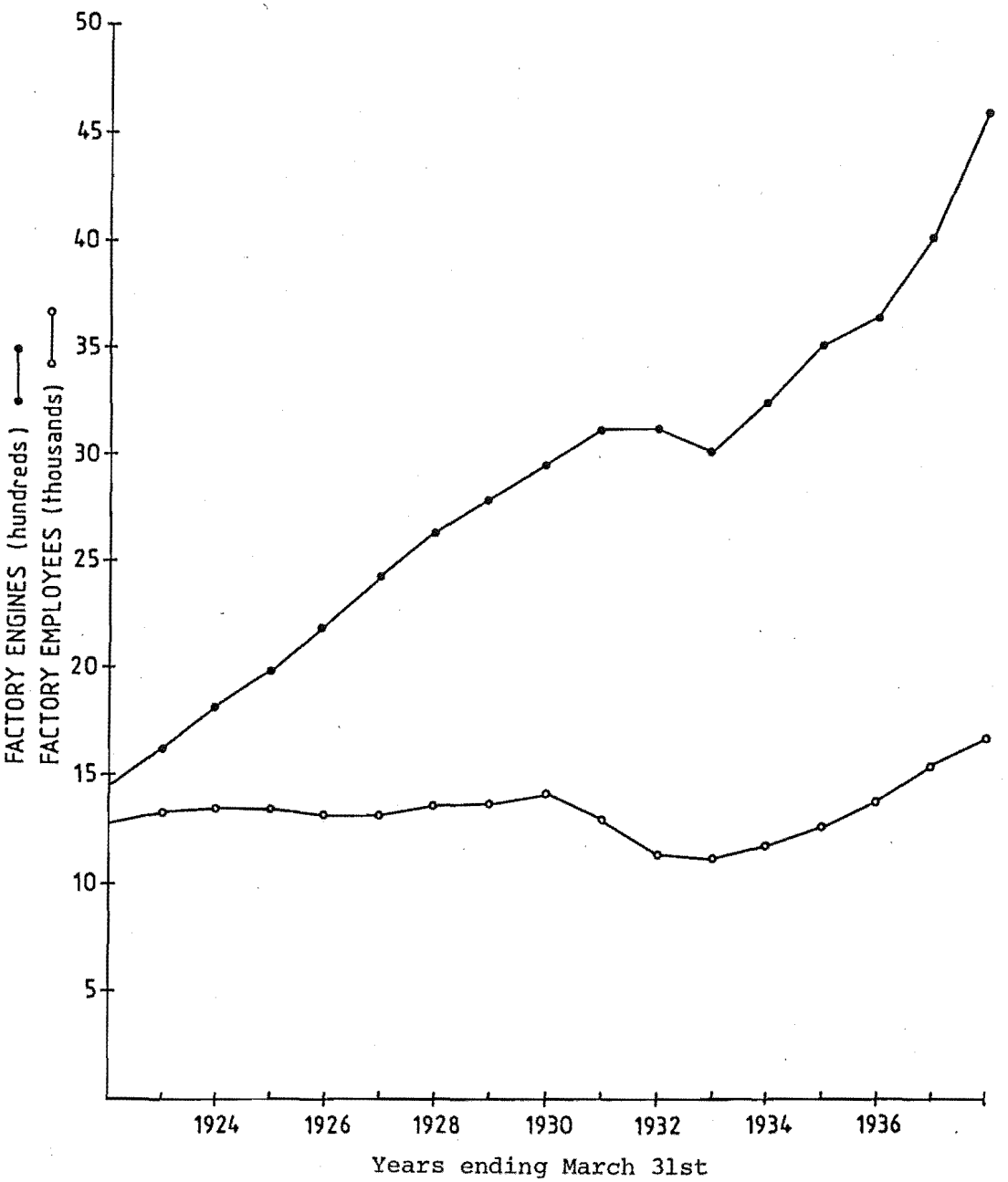
Few local industries were unaffected by electric power. Its influence proved particularly strong in the metal trades, with the speeding up of a wide range of drilling, cutting, grinding, and finishing operations, the increasing use of welding and electroplating, and the appearance of electric furnaces. The average number of electric motors being used in engineering works in Canterbury rose from 2.5 in

FIG. 4.1: FACTORY MECHANISATION IN CANTERBURY, 1922-38



Source: Census and Statistics Office, Factory Production, 1922-31; Factory and Building Production, 1932-38, "Factory Production - Summary by Provincial Districts'

FIG. 4.2: FACTORY MECHANISATION AND EMPLOYMENT IN CANTERBURY, 1922-38



Sources: CSO, Factory Production, 1922-31; Factory and Building Production, 1932-38.

1923 to 4.4 in 1929.[2] It had reached 5.7 by 1932. Other forms of motor, never numerous, had disappeared by that time. Whereas the number of employees grew by less than a third between 1923 and 1932, the number of motors in use had trebled. The burgeoning business of motor and cycle assembly and repair, typically scattered in a large number of small workshops, also turned extensively to electric motors. Even the local producers of agricultural and dairying machinery increased the number of motors in use in their works from under one per establishment in 1923 to over three in 1932. Motors in use had increased by a quarter over this period, while the number of employees had decreased by over sixty per cent. Nationally the number of men employed as welders or oxy-acetylene cutters grew from 106 in 1926 to 358 in 1936.[3] Some of these would have been engaged in the building and construction sector. The number of workers giving their occupation as "electroplater" almost doubled over the same period.

The largest factory in Christchurch, the Addington Railway Workshop, was not included in the official factory statistics. Its conversion from gas and steam to electric and motor power was comparatively late for an engineering works, and was undertaken as part of a reorganisation of railway workshops throughout the country.[4] The decision

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2. Unless otherwise stated, these and following figures on industries are calculated from statistics for individual industry groups in CSO, Factory Production, 1923-31, and Factory and Building Production, 1932.

3. Census, 1926, Vol.9, p.45; 1936, Vol.10, p.41.

4. The main thrust of the reorganisation in the South Island was to concentrate construction and heavy repairs of locomotives on the Dunedin (Hillside) works while Addington specialised in the construction of cars and wagons. AJHR, 1926, D2, p.v.

to electrify the whole complex was made in 1925, part way through the reorganisation, and was based on the rapid cheapening of hydro-electric power, a trend by then very evident.[5] A hundred and twenty-five electrical machines were installed over the next three years, including "planning-machines, wheel lathes, slotters, grinders, welders, and shop trucks".[6] Two electric furnaces were also purchased so that the railways could recycle some of its considerable supply of scrap iron. By 1930 the workshop's electrical machinery was utilising 1,860 horsepower, about a twelfth of the capacity available in Canterbury factories.[7] The installation of electric lighting throughout the complex also enhanced efficiency, as did the use of motor cranes and trucks to improve the movement of materials. Overall, the number of days required to overhaul a locomotive was reduced from fifty-five to thirty-eight between 1925 and 1928.[8] As a result of this increased efficiency, the number of workers employed at Addington was dropping long before the severe downturn in rail usage during the depression. Even within the first year of electrification and motorisation, 1925-26, the number of workshops employees was reduced by 89 through "natural attrition".[9] At the same time, there was a considerable disruption to the lives of many local workers who were

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5. AJHR, 1929, D2, p.xli.
6. AJHR, 1926, D2, p.xiv.
7. AJHR, 1930, D2, p.xlv.
8. AJHR, 1928, D2, p.x.
9. AJHR, 1927, D2, p.xi.

forced to transfer to Dunedin as part of the reorganisation.[10]

Amongst the woodworking trades, furniture-making demonstrated very clearly the inroads that light electrical machinery could make into a highly skilled area of production. Despite a high rate of growth during the housing boom of the early to middle years of the 'twenties, the number of employees in the furniture-making industry in Canterbury decreased by a fifth between 1923 and 1932. Yet the number of motors in use increased by 121% over that period. Most of these machines were quite small - the amount of horsepower in use grew by only thirty per cent. Even in the timber resawing and dressing, and the sash and door manufacturing industries, the number of electrical motors in use doubled between 1923 and 1932 while the number of employees was halved. Despite the availability of waste wood as fuel, the number of steam engines in use dropped from thirteen to five over the same period. Amongst the machines utilising the advantages of electricity was the Elliot "Woodworker" which, it was claimed, "cross-cuts, rips, mitres, bores, trenches, grooves, runs, rebates sills, mullions, sash stuff, mouldings etc".[11] With the advent of such machines it is not surprising that the number of wood machinists and "joinery workers" in New Zealand increased between 1926 and 1936 whereas the numbers of the highly skilled cabinetmakers and joiners decreased, in line

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10. In June, 1927, it was believed that up to three hundred men - about a third of the Addington workforce - would have to move. Star, 27 June, 1927. Employees were still being transferred in 1931 and the order to shift may have contributed to the suicide of one of them in that year. Star, 12 December, 1931.

11. Times, 23 September, 1926.

with the general contraction in the industry.[12]

Local textile and clothing manufacture was also greatly affected by the spread of electrical machinery. The number of wage-earning employees per machine in South Island woollen mills dropped by 22% between 1925 and 1929, the peak year for employment and production. The number of workers fell thereafter with the fall in output, but the number of machines continued to increase. The electrical sewing machine was revolutionising clothing manufacture in the 'twenties, permitting more people to purchase a wide range of cheap clothes. The number of wage-earners in Canterbury clothing factories, typically workshops attached to (and above) retail outlets such as Ballantyne's and Beath's, increased by 11.5% between 1926 and 1929. Yet production by volume grew by between 47% for suits and 528% for trousers. A rapidly growing newcomer to the local rag trade, Millers, was responsible for much of this expansion. Catering primarily for the mass market and for working people, this firm was to the fore in taking advantage of electrical machinery. In the depths of the depression it expanded rapidly, applying "mass production principles" and utilising not only electrical sewing machines, but electric cutters and an electric steam iron patented and manufactured in Christchurch.[13] Boot and shoe manufacturing was facing difficulties in the late 'twenties in New Zealand, principally due to a substantial increase in imports. Nevertheless, mechanisation appears

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12. Census, 1926, Vol.9, p.46; 1936, Vol.10, p.44.

13. Star, 5 March, 1932.

to have brought about some saving in labour. The employment of wage-earners in Canterbury footwear factories dropped by 14$ between 1926 and 1930, but production declined by less than six per cent. The rapidly growing hosiery industry was better placed financially to install new machinery. The number of motors per establishment in Canterbury increased from just over one in 1923 to over four in 1932. The number of electrical motors in use increased from eighteen to thirty-five between 1929 and 1932.

Food and beverage industries were similarly affected. Large Christchurch bakeries such as Boon's and Stacey and Hawker's based their advertising on the wide range of electric mixing, baking, slicing and wrapping machinery employed in their factories. An image of modern and hygienic mass production was considered more of an asset than one of cottage homeliness. Even so, a reputation for freshness was considered essential, and the large bakeries were able to point to their new fleets of motor vans - solid competition to the horse and cart of the traditional small producer.[14] Unlike the decentralised breadmaking industry, local biscuit and confectionary production was dominated by a single large concern, that of Aulsebrook's. Consequently it was rather more mechanised than other forms of manufacturing by 1923 with an average of six motors per establishment. By that time Aulsebrook's was also featuring its use of electrical machinery in advertising.[15] Neverthe-

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14. For advertisements featuring electrical machinery and/or motor delivery vans, see Star, 6 February, 1926; 9 February, 1929; 12 April, 10, 17 May, 1930.

15. Weekly Press and Referee, 25 July, 1923.

less, the increase in the use of motors to 1932 was still impressive with an average of over fourteen per establishment, all of them electric. The well-established local brewing and malting industry suffered considerably from the long-term secular trend in per capita consumption of alcohol, the short-term fall in sales due to the depression and its associated rise in taxation on beer, and increased competition in the North Island. However, there was a significant increase in the number of engines in use per establishment, from 3.6 in 1923 to 7.7 in 1932. The proportion of those engines which were powered by electricity increased from 80% to 98%.

Printing, a much larger industry in Canterbury, was expanding rapidly with the growth of advertising. Between 1923 and 1932 the volume of paper used by printing works in the province increased by 15% in the case of job paper and 26% in that of newsprint. The number of motors in use per establishment rose from 3.9 to 6.7. Consequently there was a decline in the number of wage-earners employed within the local printing works despite the buoyancy of the industry over the period. The number of typesetting machines rose by a quarter, while the number of operatives for each of them dropped by over a quarter between 1923 and 1929. The trend continued into the 'thirties with the Star installing a large new "push-button" rotary press in 1931[16] and the Press adopting similar equipment in its new printing house, opened in early 1933.[17]

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16. Star, 11 August, 1931.

17. Press, 31 March, 1983.

The more heavily concentrated and even larger meat freezing and preserving industry was still a substantial user of steam power in 1923. Its early establishment in the form of very large factories by New Zealand standards, its vast consumption of heat, and the usual proximity of railway lines all inclined the industry to rely on steam. In 1923 there were sixty steam-engines in operation in freezing works in the upper half of the South Island, compared with 258 electric motors. By 1932 the number of steam engines had shrunk to twenty-nine and the number of electric motors had risen to 372. During the following year, in the very depths of the depression, the number of electrical engines in use in New Zealand freezing-works increased from 1594 to 1711, a larger increase than in any year during the 'twenties. The main reason for so extensive a technological change at such an inauspicious time was the determination of the meat companies to impose a substantial wage-cut on freezing workers with the minimum of interruption to processing. The same means was chosen as in a similar dispute during the depression of 1922; the adoption of a "one man, one cut" system to replace solo butchers. This system required little training and therefore permitted large numbers of non-union workers - men from farming families, casual labourers and the unemployed - to be drafted into the works.[18] In some cases freezing-works labourers, who generally far outnumbered the butchers, were won over by the opportunity to gain higher wages.[19] However,

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18. Sun, 5 January, 1933.

19. Statement by the local secretary of the Freezing Workers' Union, H. Revell, Sun, 12 April, 1933.

unlike the situation a decade earlier, the meat companies appear to have decided on a permanent change in technique and chains were installed at Islington, Belfast and Kaiapoi. Their use was not new - Henry Ford claimed that he developed the engineering assembly-line after viewing chain-processing in Chicago meatworks.[20] Nor was it necessarily dependent on electric power. However, electricity simplified the installation of the new system, providing an easily augmented power supply, requiring no extensive networks of shafts and belts, and giving "push-button" control. The latter feature was particularly useful until the new batch of workers was trained and management got to understand the new system.

Employees in the building and construction industries were affected rather later by electrical and oil machinery than their counterparts in factories. On the other hand, the effect was more dramatic because construction methods were traditionally very labour-intensive. Very large jobs sometimes made use of a steam shovel or a crane, and steam rollers, lorries, and small locomotives were occasionally employed. But the pick, the "banjo" shovel, the hod, the wheelbarrow, and the horse-drawn dray were far more typical of construction work in New Zealand in the early 'twenties. Steam machinery was generally too heavy and powerful to be used economically on most jobs, while steam, gas and electrical machinery tended to present problems of fuel

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20. J. Bright, "The Development of Automation", in M. Kranzberg and C. Pursell, Technology in Western Civilisation, Vol.2: Technology in the Twentieth Century, New York, 1967, p.648.

supply. However, as electricity supply networks spread, the advantages of small electrical motors became increasingly evident. Mobile and versatile, they were adopted for concrete mixers, welders, saw-benches, wood-working machines, pumps, and winches. Electric floor-sanding machines were advertised as "the greatest labour savers offered to the building trade in recent years".[21] The even greater displacement of labour involved in the adoption of concrete mixers can be gauged from a description of the former system as it operated in 1922:

> I soon found out what "the board" was: a wooden platform about eight feet wide and about twenty feet long. Eight of us mounted the board, four on each side facing each other. A chain of men, pushing steel barrows loaded with sand and shingle, moved towards us.
>
> The first two blokes dumped their loads at our feet, another added cement, then my mate said, "Right-oh, Scotty. Off we go - and watch me!"
>
> We turned the heap towards the next pair, who in turn passed it to the next two. Then water was added from a hose, and the last two mixed it once more and shovelled it into the waiting barrows.[22]

The number of electric motors used in building and construction in Canterbury grew at a faster rate than the number in factories during the late 'twenties (Fig. 4.3). The virtual collapse of building activity during the early 'thirties was reflected in the numbers of machines in use, which dropped to a low-point of 186 in 1933. But this was still far above the total for 1925-26, a boom year for local builders, with a turnover four-and-a-half times that of 1932-33. The overwhelming majority of the new machines

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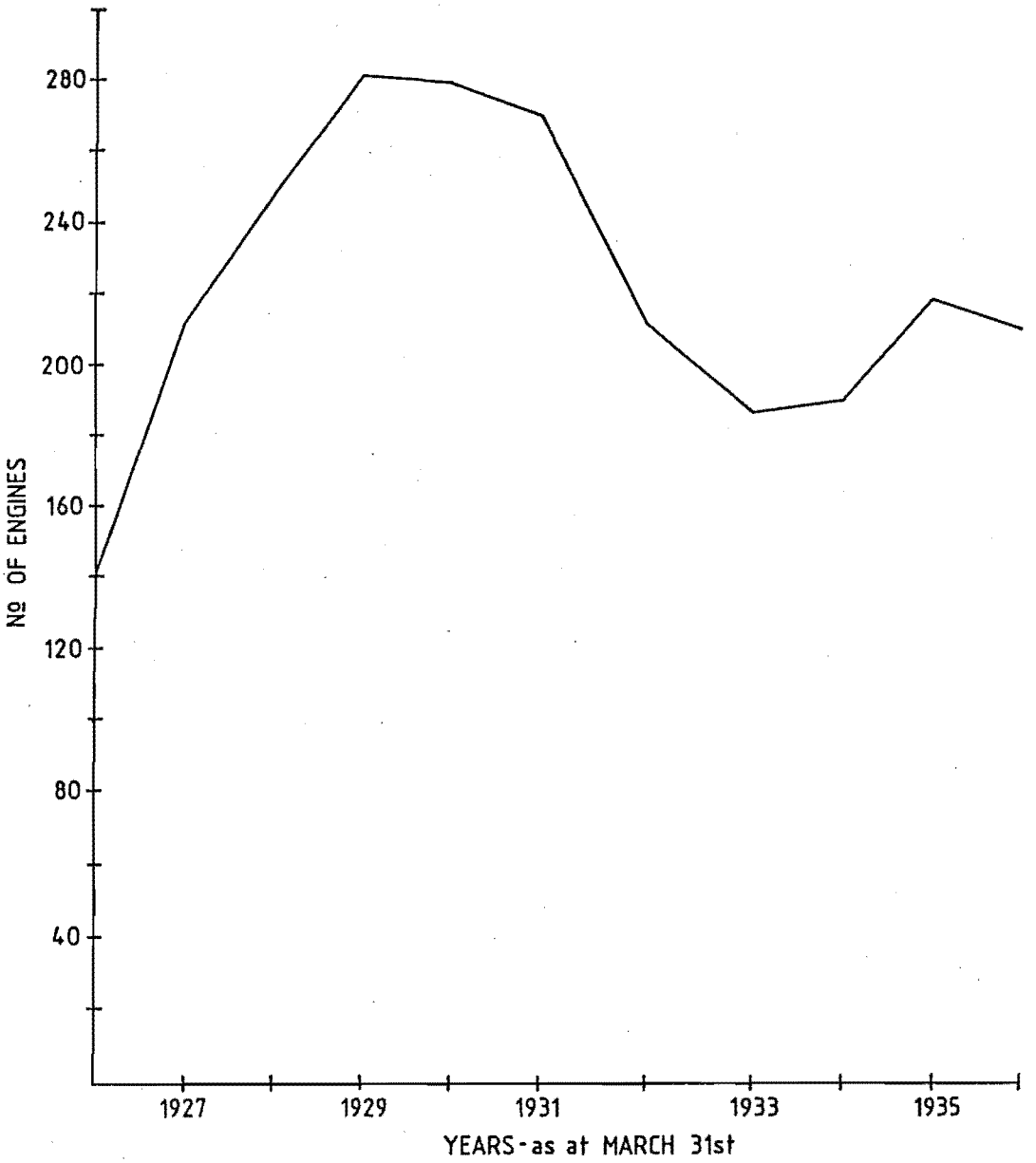
21. Weekly Press and Referee, 7 June, 1923.

22. J. Forsyth, "My First Job in New Zealand", in J. Henderson (Ed.), Our Open Country, Wellington, 1971, p.109.

FIG. 4.3: ENGINES IN USE IN THE CANTERBURY BUILDING INDUSTRY, 1926-36



Source: CSO, Factory Production, 1926-31; Factory and Building Production, 1932-36.

were powered by electricity, although mobile oil engines had some attractions (Table 4.1).

TABLE 4.1: NUMBERS OF MACHINES IN USE IN BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION IN CANTERBURY

	1926	1929	1932	1935
Electric	114	245	187	196
Oil	14	23	20	16
Gas	9	8	2	6
Steam	2	2	1	0

Source: Census and Statistics Office, Factory Production 1926, 1929; Factory and Building Production, 1932, 1935.

The use of cranes, hoists and lifts also resulted in a great saving on labour. Ferro-concrete methods of construction had been in use in Christchurch since 1905, principally, but not exclusively, on large buildings.[23] They allowed contractors to dispense with large numbers of bricklayers and labourers to keep them supplied with materials - "no more big mortar-board gangs, or processions of men with hods running up and down ladders".[24] Nevertheless, it remained common practice in the mid-'twenties for

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23. Press, 31 March, 1983.

24. Column by E.H. Howard, Labour M.P. for Christchurch South, Star, 15 June, 1930. Howard was also well aware of the influence of new technology on employment in other fields:

> Go into any of our big factories where doors and sashes and tables and chairs are made. Watch the machines shape, make, glue and fit together any piece of furniture, be it door, sash, or drawer. It is only the other day that our cabinet-makers were doing the work those wonderful machines are doing today...Think of the number of stokers displaced. Then each of our factories had steam-driven plants, now Lake Coleridge supplies the power. Star, 15 February, 1930.

wet concrete to be pushed in wheelbarrows along inclined planks to the top of buildings under construction. A spiral walkway of this type was used during the erection of St. Elmo Courts in 1929.[25] This block of flats, now overshadowed by the batholithic post office building and the new police station, was regarded as something of a local skyscraper when first completed. Five years later a crane was being used to carry concrete to the top of the State Fire Office during its construction.[26] At the end of the same year, the works foreman on the construction of the Avon Cinema noted the job would take four months whereas only "a few years ago it would have taken twelve". A large concrete mixer and electric hoist were being used.[27] In 1929 there were 245 mechanical cranes in use in New Zealand.[28] There were 303 in use in 1933 and 364 in 1935.[29] The totals of mechanical hoists were 1209, 1306, and 1352 respectively in those years.

The building and construction activity covered by the official statistics did not include the work of central or local authorites. Here the certainly very substantial and much-publicised mechanisation programme of the first Labour Government has tended to mask the considerable degree to which machines had already replaced men on local and national public works since the Great War.

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25. Star, 9 April, 1930. The late Norman Albert Greenaway, who witnessed the work as a boy, described the method of construction in conversation with the author during 1978.

26. Times, 28 July, 1934; Press, 20 September, 1935.

27. Sun, 20 December, 1934.

28. NZYB, 1930, p.973.

29. NZYB, 1936, p.686.

TABLE 4.2: CHRISTCHURCH CITY WORKS DEPARTMENT MACHINERY

	1926	1932		1926	1932
Horses	67	47	Electric trucks	6	7
Drays	65	53	Petrol trucks	6	23
Watering carts	7	0	Tractors	1	2
Traction engines	1	0	Graders	0	1
Steam lorries	1	0	Road sweepers	0	1
Steam rollers	4	5	Street flushers	0	1
Diesel rollers	0	1	Bitumen sprayers	0	1
Petrol rollers	0	3	Petrol mowers	0	1

Source: Christchurch City Council, City Engineer's Reports, 1926, 1932.

The Christchurch City Council, for example, greatly augmented its inventory of motorised machinery between 1926 and 1932 (Table 4.2). The new acquisitions were partly a response to opportunities presented to speed existing works and partly an attempt to cope with problems created by the new technology. For example, the council was now able to sweep its sealed roads mechanically, but the damage done to them by motor vehicles meant that most of the existing surfaces had to be remade. Even then, constant repatching was often necessary in heavy traffic areas such as Moorhouse Avenue, which served the railway yards and associated stores. The fact that methods for producing road surfaces capable of withstanding heavy motor traffic were still in an early stage of development added to the problem. However, the techniques adopted generally permitted a saving on labour, and in fact necessitated heavy machinery such as rollers rather than gangs of men tamping down metal. In a number of ways the new

technology reduced dramatically the very large labour-cost which would have been entailed in providing its infrastructure by traditional methods. For example, motor lorries permitted the establishment of large hot-mix bitumen plants which could supply roadworks over a radius of up to fifteen miles on the Canterbury Plains.[30] The Christchurch City Council installed a similar plant in 1929.[31] It also purchased a large concrete mixer which throughout the early 'thirties "considerably expedited the concrete paving programme,...without this machine it would have been found impossible to lay the large yardage".[32]

In the case of the City Council, change was hastened by a dynamic City Engineer, A.R. Galbraith, who was appointed in 1926. His exhaustive annual reports, which dwarfed those of his predecessor and of other departments, placed great emphasis on mechanisation. His first report noted the arrival of a "Pioneer" bitumen sprayer - "entirely satisfactory in use both for tar and for bitumen, and considerably reduces the labour on surfacing roads".[33] There was also praise for the new sweeper -

> until recently this work was done by two horse brooms attached to the Fordson tractor; men with brooms followed brushing the sweepings into heaps, which were in turn collected by drays...For the past two months the work has been done by the new "Karrier" sweeper which sprinkles the road with water, sweeps and picks up the rubbish automatically and only one man, the driver, is required.[34]

In 1929 a set of hand-held kerosene weed-burners was purchased to replace the Council's teams of weed-chippers and their drays.[35] A "street flusher and gully emptier" also arrived

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30. Weekly Press, 29 July, 1926.
31. Christchurch City Council, City Engineer's Report, 1933, p.61.
32. Ibid, 1929, p.54.
33. Ibid, 1926, p.43.
34. Ibid, p.53.
35. Ibid, 1929, p.59.

as part of the Engineer's campaign to displace the City's brush and shovel brigade.[36] Between relatively sympathetic reflections on the problem of unemployment amongst the unskilled and calls for more office staff, Galbraith regularly pointed to the amount spent on wages for the Council's thirty-seven gutter sweepers and urged their redundancy.[37]

Other Christchurch local bodies also mechanised much of their work during the late 'twenties and early 'thirties. Both the Drainage Board and its contractors invested heavily in new machinery during the massive expansion of the sewerage system carried out between 1926 and 1932. In April 1927, a local newspaper reported that

> as a result of the adoption of modern methods by the contractors, the work of extending the sewers in the Christchurch Drainage Board's district has been considerably expedited during the past few months, and those who took part in an inspection of the Board's works were greatly impressed by the extent to which mechanical appliances had replaced manual labour.[38]

Amongst the equipment noted were a drag-line, a caterpillar trench-digger, a tractor-drawn scoop for filling trenches, three pneumatic soil-rammers, a pneumatic pile-driver, and a large, tracked excavator. All these machines were petrol-driven. The report noted that mechanisation had brought keen competition between contractors, and "a considerable saving to ratepayers". One board member boasted that "last year [we] were in the pick-and-shovel age, and now [we] are in the mechanical age". At the same time, the increased use of

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36. Ibid., p.45,59.

37. Ibid., 1926, p.55; 1927, p.53; 1928, p.55; 1932, p.54; 1934, p.60.

38. Star, 11 April, 1927.

tractors and electric pumps at the sewerage farm permitted a substantial rise in the scale of operations without any great increase in the number of labourers on the staff.[39]

Similarly, the Tramways Board claimed in 1928 to have "doubled the efficiency" of relaying tracks and resurfacing roadway by using "up-to-date machinery and modern methods".[40] As with the City Council, the use of bitumen and concrete in new roading removed the need for street watering. Such roadmaking methods were applied earlier by the Waimairi County Council, which laid the first concrete road in the South Island and was consequently labelled "progressive Waimairi" by some newspapers.[41] The Waimakariri River Trust also undertook a substantial extension of its works in the late 'twenties using much motorised machinery.[42] This included draglines, crawler tractors, and lorries, claimed to be doing the work of many more horse scoops and drays at a much greater speed. A netting machine was also said to be in use.

The public works carried out by central government agencies were also extensively mechanised before 1932, with the items most favoured including lorries, graders, cement mixers, and bitumen sprayers.[43] There were comparatively

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39. Christchurch Drainage Board, Minutes, 20 May, 1924; 17 May, 1927.

40. Star, 28 September, 1927.

41. Sun, 21 March, 1928; Press, 21 May, 1930.

42. Star, 3 May, 1930.

43. Central government invested in new machinery for public works in three ways: through the Public Works Department, the Main Highways Board, and a hire-purchase scheme operated by the board for local bodies. Up to 1936 most of the machinery purchased in these ways was itemised in AJHR, D1. Each list was followed by a form of "etcetera". In 1937 the Public Works Department list became one long etcetera - "over one thousand items" at "approximately £500,000". AJHR, 1937, D1, p.xxxv. The highest number of items in any previous year had been over 200 in 1930.

few state public works in progress in the Canterbury region between 1926 and 1936, but modern methods were increasingly used on those that were. Work on the expansion of the Middleton Rail Yards was criticised initially for its use of horse-drawn implements and manual labour for earth-moving.[44] However, machinery was soon introduced.[45] In its annual reports to Parliament in 1929 and 1930 the Public Works Department illustrated its rapid new roadmaking techniques with photographs of work near Christchurch on the Akaroa, Dunedin, and Blenheim highways.[46] The bitumen-concrete surfaces laid on these roads required much less maintenance than the shingle they replaced. Further afield, but employing many Christchurch men, work on the South Island Main Trunk Railway involved a considerable use of motor machinery by the time it ceased in October, 1931.[47] In addition to the bevy of steam locomotives and steam shovels usual on such railway works, there were a large number of diesel and petrol machines including a drag-line, excavator, tractor scoop, caterpillar tractors and "power-shovels".[48] With the help of this equipment the time taken on one major cutting was reduced from the planned fifteen months to nine months. Far to the south, on the boundary between Canterbury and Otago, work on the Waitaki Hydro Scheme was extensively mechanised. In 1930, a year after construction had started, electrical machines on the site were rated at 770 horsepower,[49]

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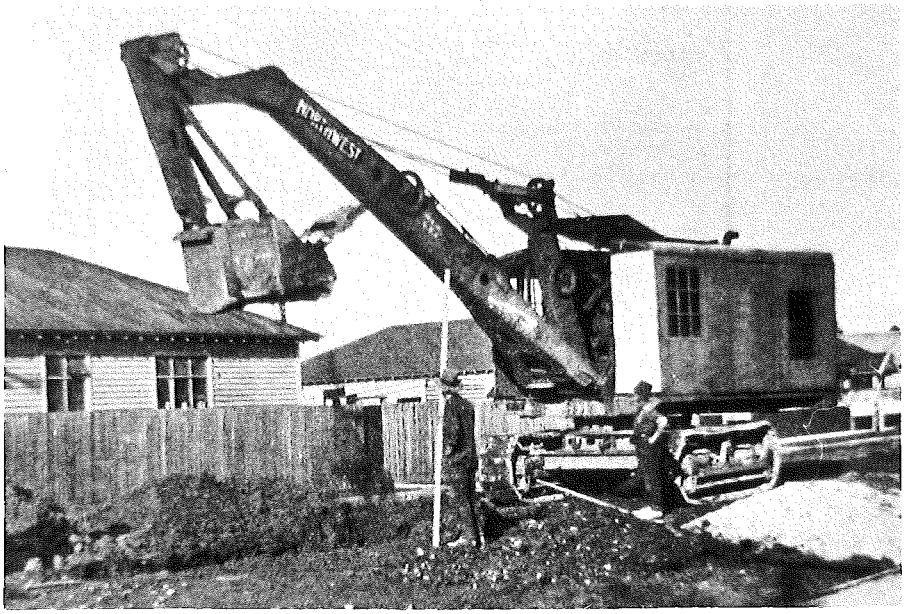
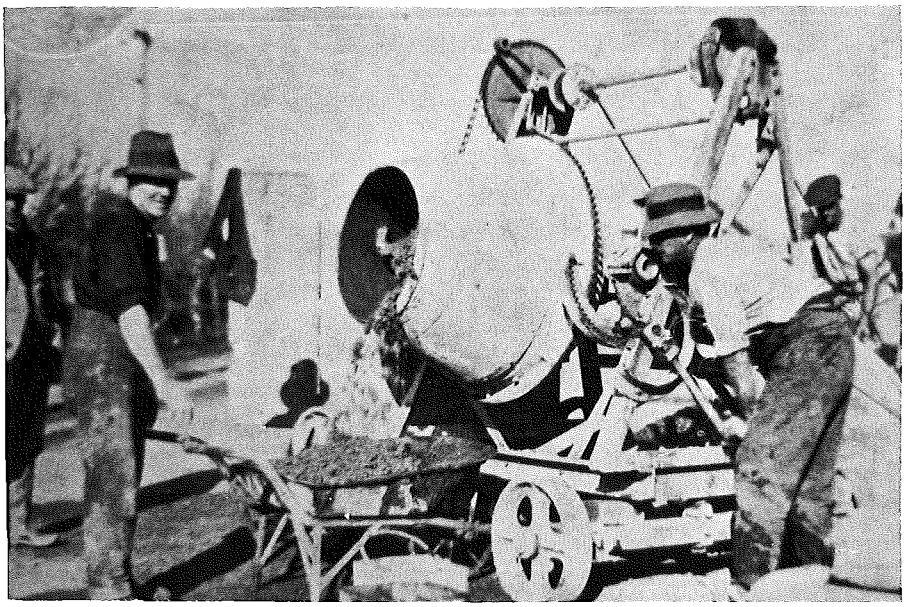
44. Star, 14 April, 1926.
45. Star, 30 September, 1926.
46. AJHR, 1929, D1, p.195-96; 1930, D1, p.182-84.
47. AJHR, 1931, D1, p.34.
48. AJHR, 1932, D1, p.31.
49. AJHR, 1930, D1, p.56.

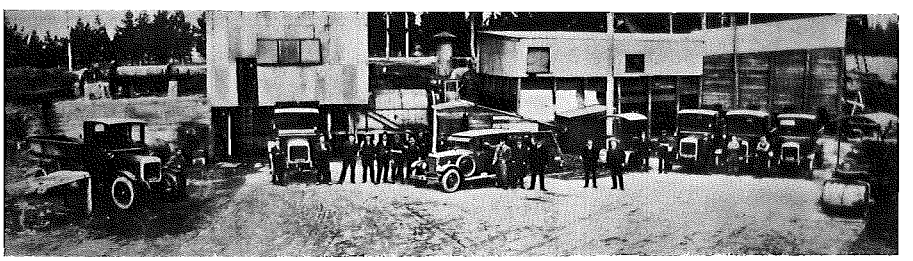
5. Excavator on Christchurch Drainage Board's works.
(Weekly Press and Referee, 28 September, 1927.)

6. Concrete-mixer on Christchurch City Council roadworks.
(Weekly Press and Referee, 14 July, 1927.)

7. Large-scale bitumen plant in Canterbury. Note the fleet of tip-trucks which could carry the hot-mix up to fifteen miles, making a larger labour-efficient plant economic.
(Weekly Press and Referee, 29 July, 1926.)







roughly equivalent to that of all the building and construction machinery in Canterbury. By 1932 the list of machines employed included "electrical pumps, air compressors, inclined tramways, cement mixers, machine tools, drills, etc."[50]

Management on this and other works became increasingly schizophrenic as the depression and government policies put more emphasis on public works as relief work. In 1931 the PWD was using "as little machinery as possible" from its impressive catalogue in constructing the tail race.[51]

> The whole of the extensive plant on the works is now well supplied with power and is working with great efficiency. To assist towards the relief of unemployment, however, work, where possible, is being carried out by manual labour rather than by mechanical means, wherever such a course can be economically justified".

The PWD went further in 1932 -

> manual labour is being utilised where practical and reasonably economic, in preference to excavating machinery.[52]

Even with this policy and less than half the original work-force, the job took only five years instead of the projected three. With modern machinery, public works were clearly not the massive users of unskilled labour they once had been.

Problems of power supply delayed the spread of electrical machinery in farming in Canterbury even more than in the building and construction industry. However, as the multitude of power supply authorities created in the early 'twenties established their networks, small electric motors were

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50. AJHR, 1932, D1, p.44.

51. AJHR, 1931, D1, p.46.

52. AJHR, 1932, D1, p.44.

installed on farms for a wide range of jobs. These included cream-separating, shearing, cutting posts and firewood, pumping household and stock water, and chaff-cutting on a limited scale. The versatility of such motors, their ease of starting and economy of labour enhanced their appeal to small farmers in particular. In dairying areas of the province, the electric milking-machine spread rapidly during the late 'twenties and early 'thirties, despite the depression and a local decline in butter and cheese production, In 1927 there were 359 such machines in Canterbury; by 1936 there were 723. The number of shearing machines - increasingly powered by electricity - grew from 850 in 1925 to 1105 in 1935. Overall, the number of electric motors on farms in Canterbury increased in every year between 1926 and 1936, with the exception of 1931-32 (Fig. 4.4). At that time there was a drop of only fourteen in the provincial total, wiped out by a rise of forty-four in the following year.

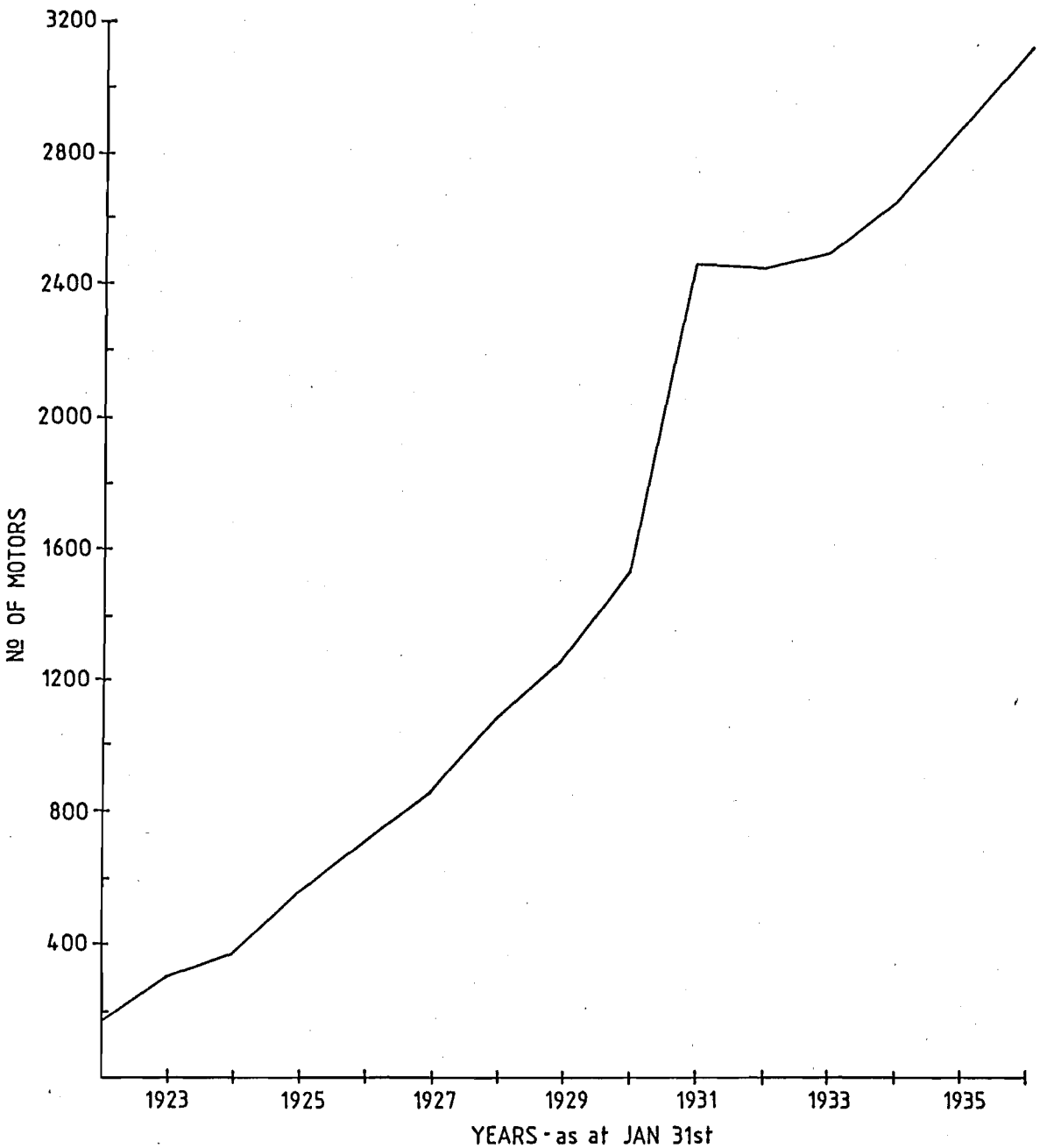
Internal combustion engines powered by oil or kerosene had become widespread on Canterbury farms before 1920 and maintained their numbers during the 'twenties and 'thirties despite the popularity of electric motors (Table 4.3).

TABLE 4.3: NUMBERS OF STATIONARY FARM ENGINES IN CANTERBURY

	1923	1926	1929	1932	1935
Electric	301	711	1254	2445	2876
Internal Combustion	1625	1852	1686	1708	1719
Steam	53	32	32	n.a.	n.a.
Water	186	104	82	n.a.	n.a.

Source: Census and Statistics Office, Agricultural and Pastoral Production, 1923-35.

FIG. 4.4: ELECTRIC MOTORS ON FARMS IN CANTERBURY 1922-36



Source: CSO, Agricultural and Pastoral Production, 1922-36, "Machinery" and "Farm Machinery".

With an output of up to fourteen horsepower, they powered a wide range of machinery from medium-sized chaff-cutters and small threshing mills to milking machines and cream-separators.[53] One application of particular significance to Christchurch's unskilled workforce was the development of a threshing machine for cocksfoot harvesting.[54] Each summer for around fifty years "an army" of workers had issued out from Christchurch onto Bank's Peninsula to cut this grass with sickles and scythes and to thresh it with flails. Steep hillsides and the dispersed nature of the crop had discouraged the use of the heavy steam-powered threshing machinery which worked the plains. In 1913, however, Andrews and Beaven developed a small portable machine for cocksfoot threshing. During the 'twenties, forty-seven of these mills took over most of this previously entirely manual operation.

Yet it was through the tractor that the internal combustion engine most affected farm work in Canterbury during the interwar period. The dry, flat croplands of the province were particularly suitable for the use of tractors, and the local growth in their numbers at times rivalled the spread of the much cheaper electric motor (Fig. 4.5). By the late 'twenties they were clearly replacing both traction engines and horses in agricultural areas of Canterbury (Table 4.4).

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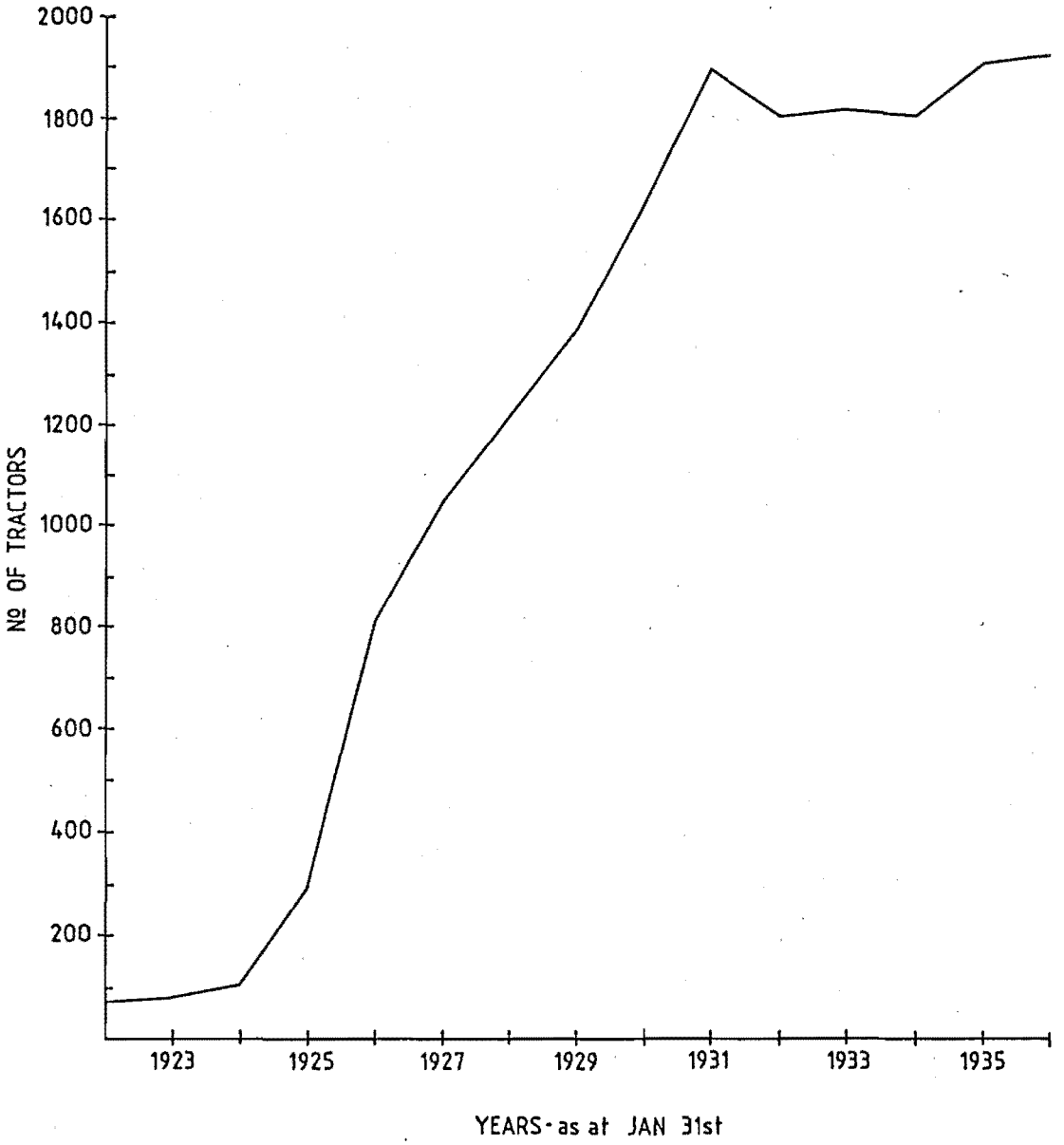
53. M. Anderson, The Water-Joey, Wellington, 1976, Appendix 3 (letter from W. Beaven), p.112.

54. Ibid., p.111.

FIG. 4.5: TRACTORS ON FARMS IN CANTERBURY, 1922-36



Source: CSO, Agricultural and Pastoral Production, 1922-36, "Machinery" and "Farm Machinery".

TABLE 4.4: MECHANISATION OF FIELDWORK IN CANTERBURY

	1923	1926	1929	1932	1935
Tractors	77	805	1378	1800	1901
Traction Engines	184	187	143	n.a.	n.a.
Horses (thousands)	60	57	55	52	49

Source: Census and Statistics Office, Agricultural and Pastoral Production, 1923-35.

In 1927 there were 196 traction engines in use on farms in the province. By 1930 the total was down to 138. The fall was even more dramatic amongst these steam locomotives which were operated by contractors. In 1927 the number of traction engines registered for road use (the majority of them in Canterbury) totalled 494. By 1930 they were down to 234.[55] There was also a significant drop in the number of horses on the province's farms. As pastoral farming work was as yet little affected by motor technology, most of this drop would have been due to the use of tractors in agriculture and trucks on roads.

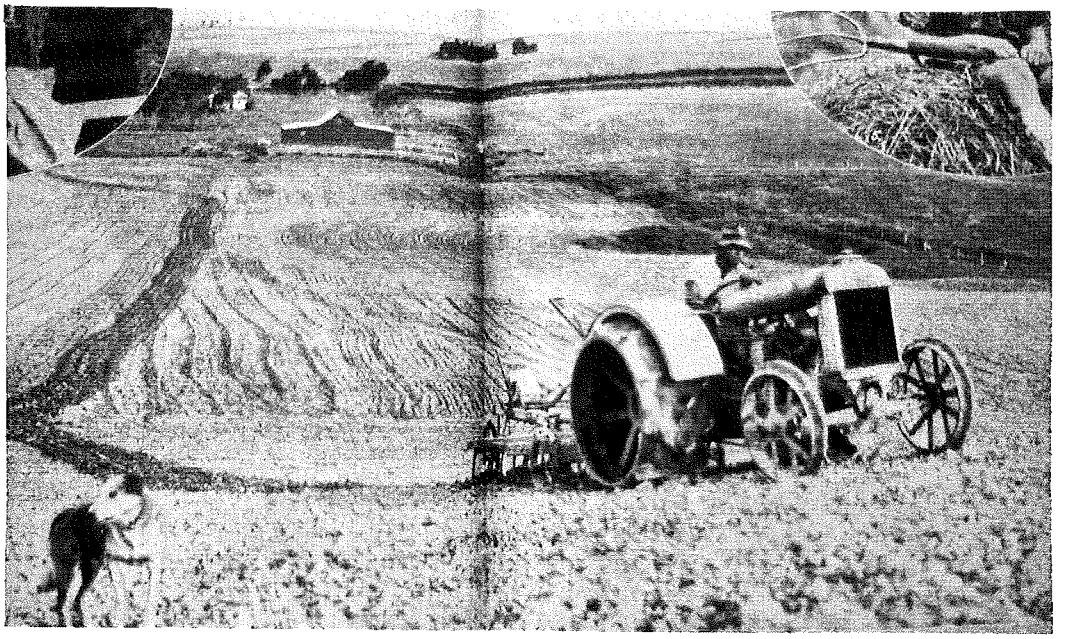
Cultivation and drilling were the operations first affected, but harvesting soon followed as tractor-drawn reapers-and-binders began to replace horse-drawn models. The swathe cut by the new machines could be up to twice as wide. They were therefore particularly favoured by owners of big farms who were large employers of labour.[56] Threshing was

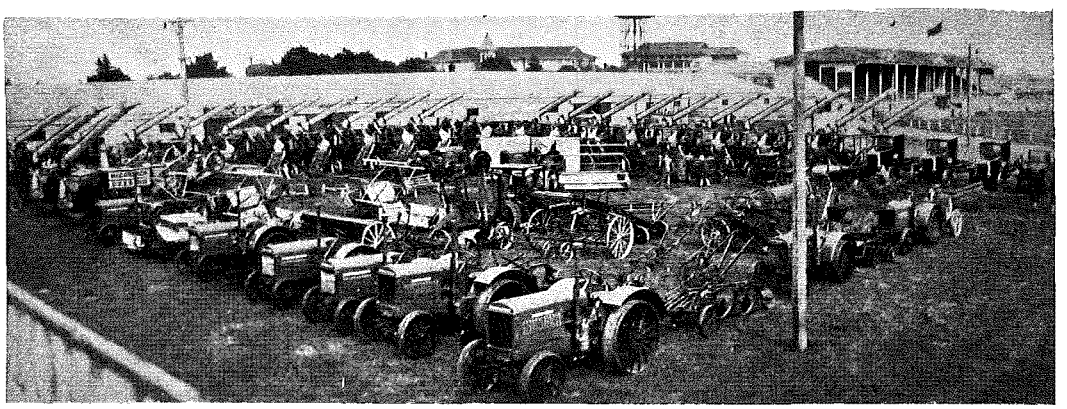
55. AJHR, 1930, H40, p.72.

56. B. Evans, A History of Farm Implements and Implement Firms in New Zealand, Feilding, 1956, p.40-41.

8. Tractor working on rolling country, previously thought unsuitable for machinery.
(Weekly Press and Referee, 23 December, 1926.)

9. Tractors and motorised machinery at Christchurch A. and P. Show. Note early model of power-grader in centre of display. This one belonged to the Paparua County Council.
(Weekly Press and Referee, 23 November, 1927.)





next affected, with the arrival of the American, or tin, mill in 1926. It required less labour than the established wooden mill, and could be driven off a tractor rather than a traction engine.[57] Furthermore, it was cheap enough for many farmers to thresh their own grain in co-operation with their neighbours rather than waiting for a contractor,[58] and a possible shower of rain. In this way they could also cut the labour cost of threshing because under legislation passed by the Reform Government in 1927 industrial awards could not be applied to their farm employees. The threshing-mill contractors also resisted the extension of their award to tin mills. When they finally gave in, three years after the introduction of the new machinery, most Canterbury farmers operating such mills on their own farms gained an exemption from the award.[59] Within a couple of seasons of its introduction the tin mill was itself facing competition as header-harvesters were imported for peas, grain and small seeds.[60] These machines were generally tractor-drawn, but in 1932 the first motorised "autoheaders" appeared.[61]

These innovations led to the progressive displacement of large numbers of horse teams and threshing gangs. As early as 1926, unemployed men were blaming tractors for their plight. R.B. Owen, the businessman who was the main

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57. Anderson, op.cit., p.107.

58. This and the advent of the tractor may well have formed the technological background to repeated reports from itinerant labourers that farmers were doing their own work. Times, 3 February, 1926; Sun, 21 November, 1930; 21 July, 1931.

59. Star, 13 November, 1930.

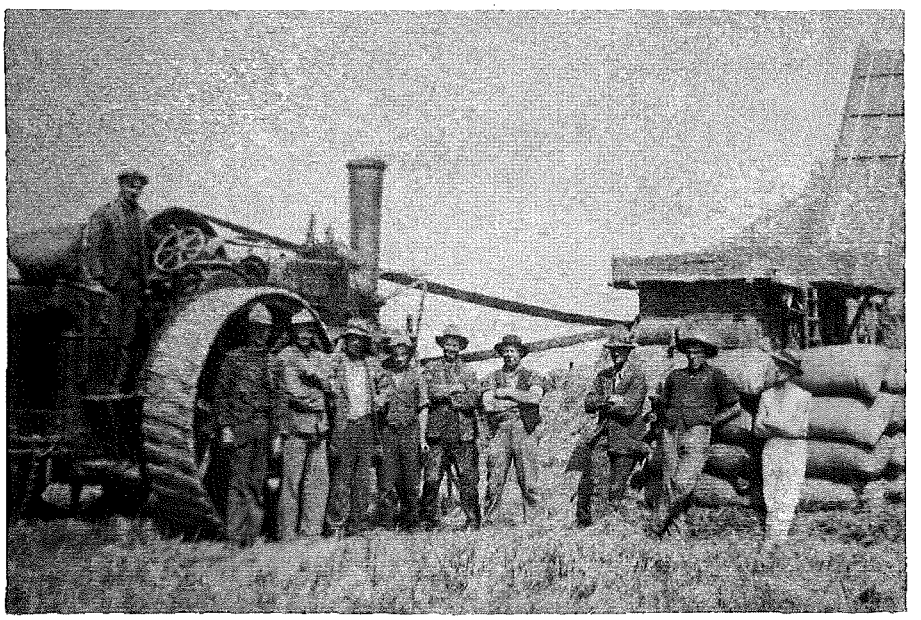
60. Evans, op.cit., p.82-100.

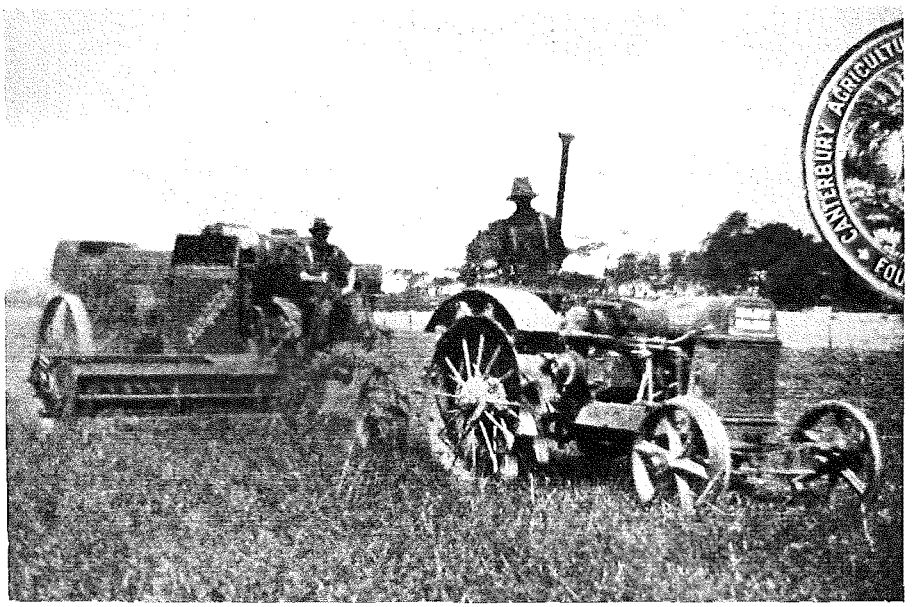
61. Anderson, op.cit., p.111.

10. Traditional threshing-mill with traction engine in 1923. Note the size of gang required to work the mill. This was only the last part of the harvest - reaping and binding, stooking, and stacking had to be done over a prolonged period before this stage was reached.
(S. Penney, Lake Ellesmere to Te Pirita, p.152.)

11. "Sunshine" header-harvester in a crop of peas. Most crops could now be harvested in a single operation with few workers.
(Weekly Press and Referee, 14 March, 1928.)

12. "Sunshine" auto-header, introduced to New Zealand in 1932.
(B. Evans, A History of Farm Implements and Implement Firms in New Zealand, p.41.)

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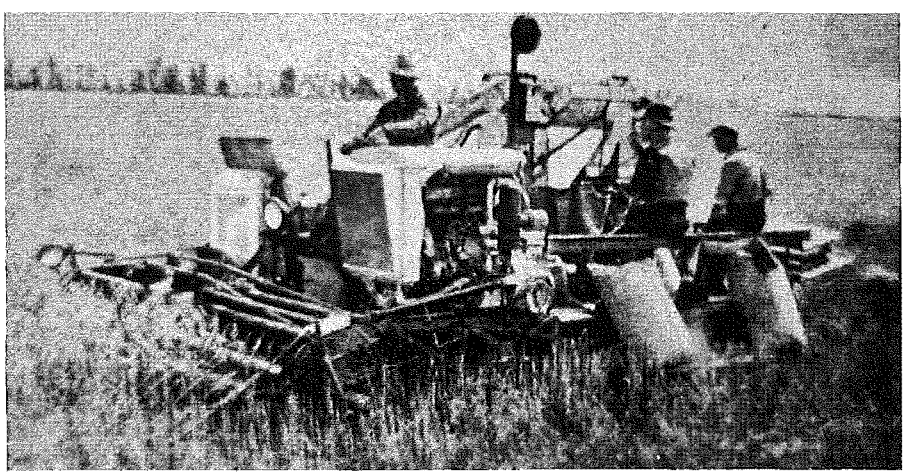

force behind the Christchurch Unemployment Committee, conveyed their view that "these tractors were able to do the same amount of work as two, and sometimes three, teams of horses, with the result that fewer men are needed".[62] Similarly, the gradual elimination of the need to dry wheat and barley by stooking in the field and stacking represented a vast saving of labour. It also cut the time required to get the crop in and reduced the depredations of weather and pests in stooks and stacks. Oats for chaff still had to be treated in the old way, but the use of tractors and trucks had clearly reduced the demand for chaff. Andrews and Beaven, the major New Zealand manufacturers of chaff-cutters, ceased making them in 1926.[63] Oaten chaff actually increased in price during the mid-'twenties, speeding the decrease in its competitiveness with petrol (Table 4.5). Between 1927 and 1932 the price of the latter fuel was much less affected by increased taxation if used on the farm rather than for road transport. The competitiveness of chaff therefore declined further. There was some reduction in this decline between 1932 and 1935, a petrol-tax was imposed upon all imports of the fuel, regardless of end-use. This may well have contributed to the slow growth in the number of tractors in Canterbury thereafter. The total had dropped by about five per cent in 1931-32 and it recovered only slowly. In 1936 there were 1920 tractors on Canterbury farms, as against 1893 in 1931. On the other hand, the total amount of tractive power in use appears to have levelled off rather than declined.

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62. Press, 22 July, 1926.

63. Anderson, op.cit., p.110.

TABLE 4.5: PRICES OF FARM FUELS, 1923-35 (1923 = 100)[64]

	1923	1926	1929	1932	1935
Electricity	100	76	28	26	25
Petrol	100	74	43	35	45
Oil	100	107	104	100	63
Coal (a)	100	94	104		
(b)	100	92	90	88	94
Oaten Chaff	100	137	98	91	79

Sources: AJHR, 1923-35, D1, Report of the Electricity Division, (electricity); CSO, Trade and Shipping, 1923-35; NZYB, 1933, p.244; 1935, p.229 (oil and petrol); Prices, Wages, etc., 1923-29, "Wholesale Prices - Christchurch" (Coal (a)); Ibid., "Wholesale Prices - Index Numbers by Groups" (Coal (b)); Agricultural and Pastoral Production, 1923-35, "Value of Crops Grown" and "Yields of Crops by Land Districts" (Oaten Chaff).

A steady increase in the average horsepower per tractor indicates both that purchases of new tractors were continuing at a significant rate and that their working capacity was growing. Between 1932 and 1936 the average rating of tractors in Canterbury increased from 13.93 hp. to 15.57 hp.[65]

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64. The electricity figures are calculated from revenue per unit sold by the Springs-Ellesmere Electrical Power Board, which was one of the few rural power boards in Canterbury with a full year's operation in 1923. It served a substantial rural population in a fertile mixed cropping and livestock area within a relatively short distance of Christchurch. Comparison with other rural Canterbury electrical authorities such as the Bank's Peninsula and North Canterbury Electric Power Board shows them to have reduced charges more rapidly but from a higher starting point.

    Coal (a) has been calculated from prices for New Zealand screened coal at wharf (presumably Lyttelton). Unfortunately that series was yet another statistical casualty of the depression. Coal (b) is based on a more general index combining prices in the four main centres and for different types of coal.

65. CSO, Agricultural and Pastoral Production, 1932, 1936, "Machines on Farms".

Some of this rise may well have been due to a move towards diesel-powered machines. The price of oil was becoming increasingly competitive and diesel technology was making significant advances.

In all, the number of engines, mobile and stationary, on Canterbury farms grew by at least 150% between 1923 and 1933, and their total horsepower rose by over 245%.[66] Between 1933 and 1936 there was a further increase in the total number of internal combustion, electrical and tractor engines of just under twelve per cent, and an increase in their power of over fourteen per cent.[67] In addition the use of motor lorries and even motor cars greatly reduced the labour required on many farms to tend and to drive horses. In July, 1933, farmers owned almost a third of all light trucks in New Zealand, and around a fifth of all heavy ones.[68] They also held thirty per cent of all motor cars. These vehicles were not only widely used for transporting materials and produce about and off the farm, they were often converted into motors for saw-benches and other small machines via ingenious power take-off systems.

While factory machinery began its major shift to the new technology in the early 'twenties, and agricultural machinery in the second half of the decade, change in the transport industry in Canterbury was rather more complex.

In urban transport, for example, there were two waves of change, dominated by two different forms of energy. The

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66. Ibid., 1923-33.

67. Ibid., 1933-36.

68. AJHR, 1934, H40, p.34.

electric tram had provided the main form of transport for Christchurch commuters for some time. Commencing in 1906, this service superseded much more limited horse and steam-tram networks. Its cheap fares had permitted the spread of "quarter-acre" sections for working people, and had converted surrounding villages such as Papanui and New Brighton into outlying suburbs. There were no significant additions to the system's permanent-way after 1918, but the Tramways Board, an elected body, did expand and modernise its fleet.[69] And there was further investment in electricity after 1930 in the form of several trolley-buses.[70]

The technological innovations which affected the employment of Christchurch's "trammies" most severely between the wars were the installation of driver-operated doors and "dead-man" handles. These effectively converted most rail-cars to one-man operation and contributed to a fall in the number of conductors in Christchurch from 159 in 1926 to only 71 in 1936.[71] These reductions were also assisted by the passage of an Order-in-Council allowing the board to use trailers without separate conductors.[72] Behind the adoption of such labour-saving methods lay the influence of oil-fuel technology in the shape of the motor car. This progressively whittled away at the profitability of all forms of public transport. Although the total number of passengers carried

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69. G. Stewart, The End of the Penny Section, Wellington, 1973, p.125.

70. Ibid., p.158.

71. Census, 1926, Vol.9, p.56; 1936, Vol.10, p.65.

72. H. Roth, "The Christchurch Tram Strike of 1932", New Zealand Monthly Review, August, 1973, p.12.

by the trams only reached its peak in 1926-27, the number of passengers as a proportion of the population served by the tramway system had been dropping since 1919-20.[73] The municipal tramways had never been very profitable in Christchurch. The sprawling nature of the city made a very extensive system necessary, with a large investment relative to the population served.[74] At the same time, the flatness of the terrain encouraged the use of bicycles. Mark Twain had described Christchurch as a city in which it seemed that half the population rode bicycles and the other half dodged them. Yet the traffic surveys carried out by the city council in the 'twenties and 'thirties suggested that the number of bicycles in use was growing faster than most other forms of transport.[75] On top of this the motor car was skimming off much of the tramways' wealthy and recreational patronage,[76] pushing the desperately struggling Board inexorably towards a trading loss.

A strong growth in the taxi business, facilitated rather than discouraged by the depression, contributed to the decline of the tramways. Christchurch's hansom cabs proved remarkably resilient, with fifteen licences still being issued in 1926.[77] There was little expansion in the number of taxi-cabs operating after 1926, but a considerable increase in the number of drivers licensed,[78] particularly with the arrival of the share-

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73. Christchurch Tramway Board, Annual Report, 1918-36.

74. Press, 18 November, 1927.

75. See Appendix C.

76. Press, 18 August, 1926; 29 April, 1930.

77. Christchurch City Council, Town Clerk's Report, 1926.

78. In 1926 the city council issued 296 taxi-drivers' licences; in 1928, 360; in 1931, 532. Ibid., 1926-32.

driving system during 1929. Although the number of men giving their occupation as taxi-driver increased only from 126 to 155 between 1926 and 1936,[79] 446 taxi-drivers' licences were issued in the latter years.[80] Large numbers of out-of-work young men drove taxis occasionally and in Christchurch, as in some Australian cities, saying that you drove a taxi was often a roundabout way of saying you were unemployed.[81] An official inquiry in 1936 found that some drivers were virtually working the clock around for very low returns.[82] Although minimum fares were set by the city council and policed by its traffic officers, under-cutting must have been impossible to prevent in such a desperately competitive situation. Certainly the council's traffic surveys showed an increase of more than fifty per cent in taxi movements between 1929 and 1932, and a doubling between 1929 and 1936. This came after a decade of static to falling taxi traffic. It seems likely that taxis provided even hotter competition for the trams after 5.30 p.m., when the survey period ended, because the share-driving system had obviated the need to pay overtime. Clearly hunger was helping to keep more cars on the road for longer. This did nothing to improve standards of road safety - there were reports of drivers falling asleep at the wheel[83] - but it permitted the capture of more passengers. Service cars ("taxi-buses") and coaches were not as significant in long-

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79. Census, 1926, Vol.9, p.56; 1936, Vol.10, p.65.

80. Christchurch City Council, op.cit., 1936.

81. W. Lowenstein, Weevils in the Flour, Melbourne, 1978, p.312.

82. See below, p. 224.

83. Star-Sun, 30 September, 1936.

distance passenger services out of Christchurch as in the other main centres.[84] This was perhaps because of the relatively extensive local railway network. Nevertheless, long-distance bus services out of Christchurch did grow during the late 'twenties, with a large part of their custom coming from workers who travelled to, and between, jobs in the country. Consequently they shared in the hardships of rural labour during the early 'thirties and the number of buses and service cars in Canterbury fell by about a third between 1931 and 1933.[85]

The Railways Department believed that it was the private motor car rather than the bus that was taking away its passengers. However, it was more concerned with competition from goods lorries: "the road transporters are becoming more and more active,...many must be running at a loss... [but] others seem to be always prepared to take up the running".[86] This was an important aspect of the background to the lay-offs of the depression years which reduced the number of railways staff in the South Island from 7314 in 1930 to 5391 in 1933.[87]

New technology also exerted a direct influence on the level of employment in the railways. Besides the reorganisation and modernisation of the rail workshops, there were numerous labour-saving innovations in daily working. These included automatic warning devices at busy level-crossings, beginning with the Riccarton Road crossing in 1926. Such

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84. AJHR, 1930, H40, p.87.

85. AJHR, 1934, H40, p.31.

86. AJHR, 1928, D2, p.xxii.

87. AJHR, 1930-33, D2.

machines were judged "less expensive than crossing-keepers".[88] There was also a rapid spread of automatic train-signalling equipment in Canterbury and the installation of telephones for communication between stations. Local marshalling and goods were now extensively flood-lit and their work speeded by the use of electric shunting engines, pumps and cranes.[89]

However, the most significant local use of electricity in rail transport was the electrification of the Lyttelton line, completed early in 1929. One of the main reasons behind this move was a large projected increase in the tonnage of goods to be carried on the line. A widening of the existing tunnel to take two tracks or the construction of a road tunnel were suggested alternatives, along with the perennial chestnut of a port in Christchurch itself. Such major undertakings would have been very large employers of local labour in difficult times. In the event, the decision of the Coates Government to electrify the single track proved to be correct economically, at least in the short-term. There was no major increase in traffic on the line until the 'forties, and the electrified single track was always able to cope. The six electric locomotives which used the new system also brought great savings on fuel and labour costs.[90] The wage cost per locomotive mile was half that with steam engines and there was a massive reduction in expenditure on boiler and general cleaning. In 1931-32 the total cost per locomotive-mile on the Lyttelton line was

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88. AJHR, 1926, D2, p.xxv.

89. AJHR, 1928, D2, p.xxiii, xxiv; 1935, D2, p.xiv.

90. AJHR, 1932, D2, p.28.

calculated to be 18.52d., compared with 22.2d. on the much longer runs of the South Island Main Trunk, which had to carry a much lower capital cost per mile. The undoubted improvement to the comfort of passengers and crew[91] must be set against the loss of a number of steady jobs which might otherwise have been created on the railways.

At the far end of the tunnel electricity was modernising the waterfront. Manpower, shunting horses and a limited number of steam winches and steam cranes had carried out most of the cargo-handling on the wharves up to the early 'twenties. In 1922, however, the Lyttelton Harbour Board began to purchase a range of electric cranes and capstans.[92] By 1926 it was sufficiently impressed by the improvement in turnaround, the lower running costs and the comparative lack of maintenance involved with the new equipment to embark upon a full replacement programme.[93] Two years later virtually every ship to visit the port was using these facilities. During the same period, electric floor-lighting was installed on the wharves to increase security and to facilitate longer working hours, and electric pumps replaced steam at the port's dry-dock.[94] Some elevators were also mechanised. Despite the considerable displacement of casual labour that these innovations entailed, there was comparatively little increase in the number of permanent staff

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91. Lyttelton Harbour Board, Annual Report, 1930, p.2. "The journey of 7 miles between Lyttelton and Christchurch is now a pleasure, instead of a penance, as it was in the days of 1 3/4 miles of smoke, steam and soot in the Moorhouse Tunnel".

92. Ibid., 1920, p.1.

93. Ibid., 1926, p.1, 33; 1927, p.7; 1928, p.9.

94. Ibid., 1926, p.3.

employed by the Board to carry out regular work such as the manning of cranes.

The whole movement in transport towards oil fuels and electricity meant less work for the port. Its effect combined with that of the opening of the Otira Tunnel in 1923 to reduce drastically the amount of coal-handling at Lyttelton. In 1922 over 150,000 tons of coal passed through the port.[95] By 1925 this total was down to 119,000 tons and in 1936 it stood at 17,000 tons. There was also a significant decline in the northward shipment of horse fodder. Coal and fodder were bulky commodities, usually requiring a large amount of labour to load - in 1927 the Board finally rejected a proposal for a coal-handling crane because of the continuing rapid decline in tonnage consigned through the port.[96] On the other hand, the handling of the growing volume of oil-fuel became increasingly labour-efficient. During 1926 the Vacuum and British Imperial oil companies installed bulk oil tanks and in October of the following year almost a million gallons of motor spirit was pumped from the S.S. Lincoln Ellsworth.[97] The use of pumps, pipelines, bulk storage tanks, and special rail tankers all considerably streamlined the port's work in the late 'twenties.[98]

Nor were the changes wrought by the new technology confined to dry land. The move towards burning oil rather than coal in steamships, a development which had begun

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95. CSO, Trade and Shipping, 1921-36, "Shipping by Ports".

96. Lyttelton Harbour Board, op.cit., 1927, p.2.

97. Ibid., 1928, p.2.

98. W. Scotter, A History of Port Lyttelton, Christchurch, 1968, p.249.

before the Great War, was particularly rapid during the 'twenties. In 1924 the inter-island ferries Maori and Wahine were converted to liquid fuel.[99] These two vessels provided a high proportion of the shipping movements at Lyttelton. All the seven steamships launched by the Union Line, the largest local carrier, between 1925 and 1939 were oil-burners.[100] Such ships promised a faster turnaround, without the laborious work of loading coal and ensuring its safe distribution in the bunkers. They were also able to devote much less space to fuel and more to cargo. Above all, they required less labour to stoke, clean and refuel. Nevertheless, motor ships were already beginning to replace oil-burners in their turn by the end of the 'twenties. These diesel-powered ships tended to be faster. They required still less fuel, and had no boiler-room, thus enabling even more cargo to be carried. Once again, they required less staff for cleaning boilers and furnaces, and for tending the engines. The growing number of oil-tankers visiting Lyttelton were all motor ships, as were a number of new coastal vessels which called regularly. Between 1928 and 1934 much of the export frozen meat trade out of Lyttelton was given over to large new motor ships.[101] The volume of such exports was not adversely affected by the depression - it actually increased significantly - and the number of ocean-going arrivals remained fairly constant.[102] However, the amount of coastal cargo carried tended to decline

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99. Ibid., p.191.

100. S. Waters, Union Line, Wellington, 1952, p.52.

101. Scotter, op.cit., p.191-93.

102. Ibid., p.192.

in the face of competition from motor transport on the roads. The effect was particularly severe in the case of trans-shipments from the smaller ports.[103] At the same time, the predominant source of mechanical power to local vessels shifted from steam to labour-saving diesel in around a decade (Table 4.6).

TABLE 4.6: VESSELS REGISTERED IN NEW ZEALAND

31 Dec.	1924	1926	1929	1932	1935
Sail	123	92	71	58	52
Steam	276	262	253	225	188
Motor	165	204	217	236	255

Source: NZYB, 1926-37.

The technological changes in the shipping industry were reflected in the census statistics on occupations.[104] Between 1926 and 1936 there was a fall of less than seven per cent in the number of seamen, sailors and deckhands in New Zealand and a decline of less than ten per cent in the number of officers. However, the total of stokers, firemen and trimmers dropped by almost half, from over a thousand in 1926.

The transport of goods by road was also being revolutionised between the wars. The number of motor lorries registered in central Canterbury more than doubled between 1926 and 1932 (Fig. 4.6). There was also a marked increase

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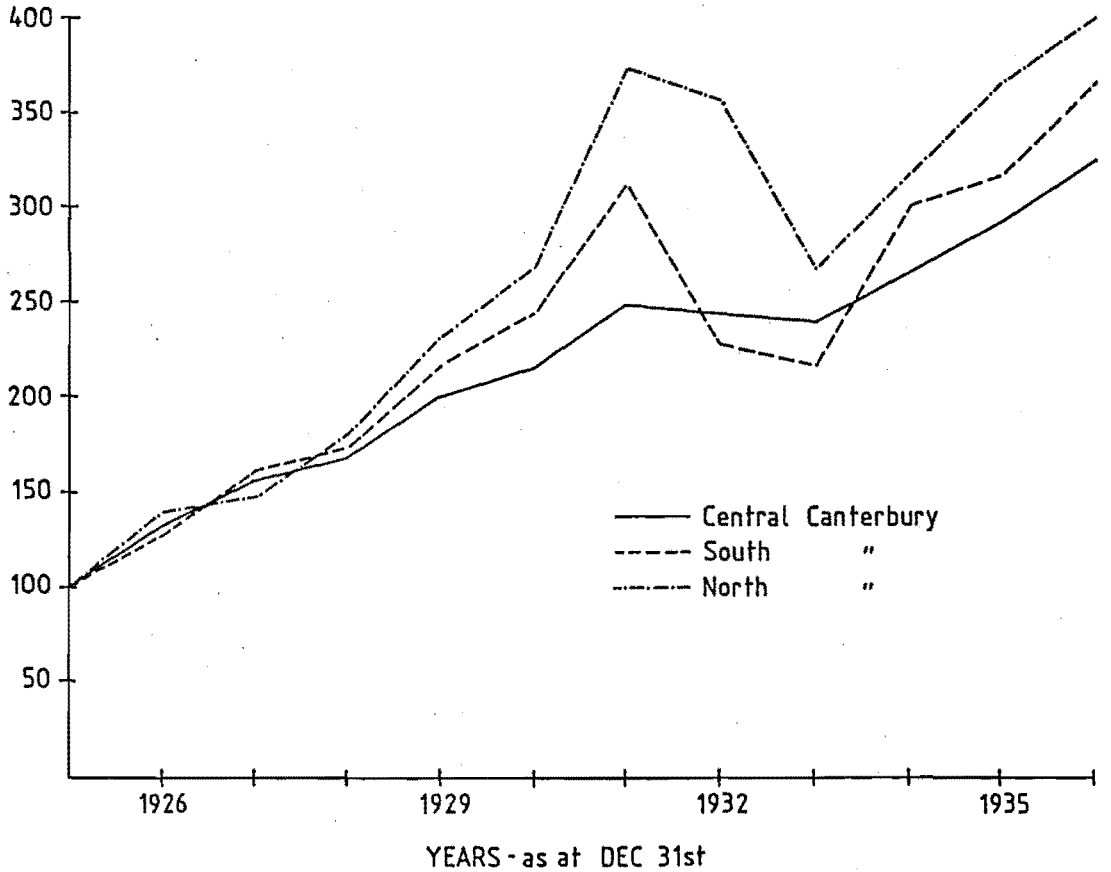
103. CSO, op.cit., loc.cit.

104. Census, 1926, Vol.9, p.52; 1936, Vol.10, p.61.

FIG. 4.6: LORRY REGISTRATIONS IN CANTERBURY, 1925-36, (1925 = 100)



Source: AJHR, H-40, 1930-37.

in their average weight. The proportion of the national lorry fleet classified as under two tons fell from 71% in 1926 to 66% in 1932.[105] There was certainly some growth in the total volume of goods carried by all forms of transport to 1931 - increased exports and imports, and the growing volume of factory production, retail sales, and public works outweighing the fall in building activity since 1926. However, much of the increase in the tonnage carried by motor transport appears to have been at the expense of horse-power and road locomotives, and the growth of rail freight. For example, the Christchurch City Council licensed 311 heavy horse-drawn vehicles in 1924-25, but only 117 in 1929-30.[106] Similarly, the railways carried only a marginally greater tonnage of freight in 1930-31 than they had in 1923-24.[107]

The effect of the economic crisis on the move to motor transport does not appear to have been great or prolonged. There was a drop of less than five per cent in the number of lorries registered in Central Canterbury between 1931 and 1933. The city council's traffic surveys and licensing records also suggest that any setback was temporary. The number of light and heavy vans recorded in the surveys increased by 32% between 1926 and 1932, and by a further 29% between 1932 and 1936. The number of "horse and trade carts" fell by over 60% between 1926 and 1932, and again by 55% over the next four years. The number of licences issued by the city council for "motor delivery vans"

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105. NZYB, 1927, p.402; 1933, p.295.

106. Christchurch City Council, Chief Inspector's Report, 1925; Chief Traffic Inspector's Report, 1930.

107. NZYB, 1926, p.365; 1932, p.308.

fluctuated wildly, but stood no lower at its lowest point during the early 'thirties than in 1928.[108] The number of van drivers' licences issued actually increased from 1931 and leapt ahead in 1935. From the surveys and the licensing records it would appear that the displacement of older forms of road transport in the city accelerated during the recovery phase of the depression. The number of lorries registered in Canterbury as a whole seems to have been rising again by March, 1934,[109] and the number of lorries in central Canterbury had exceeded the previous record of 1931 by the end of 1934.[110] Moreover, the further development of diesel power had brought with it a speeding up of the trend towards bigger trucks. The proportion of lorries under two tons in Canterbury fell from 70.9% in December, 1932, to 68.5% in March 1933, and 66.8% in March, 1934.[111] This was a significant decline in just over a year. The fall in total registrations was more dramatic in rural areas of the province than in the area around Christchurch (Fig. 4.6). But so were the increases in lorry registrations before 1931 and after 1933. There were also more opportunities to evade the expense of registration in the country, and hard times would have increased the incentive to try. Whether in town or country, motor goods transport was too cost-efficient, rapid and

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108. Christchurch City Council, op.cit., 1926-36.

109. AJHR, 1933, H40, p.27; 1934, H40, p.31.

110. AJHR, 1935, H40, p.24.

111. Ibid., 1933-35.

convenient not to continue to replace other forms of transport, despite the depression.

There were also significant changes under way in the nature of retailing and office work due to new technology. One of the most widespread was the increasing use of typewriters, a largely non-electric innovation. The number of persons employed primarily to operate these machines rose much faster than the 16% growth in the workforce between 1926 and 1936.[112] The rate of increase (38%) was much smaller than that between 1916 and 1926 (386%) but was still half as large in absolute terms, despite the depression.[113] However, electricity did help to improve business communications in a number of ways. The year 1926 saw the installation of a machine printing system in Christchurch and the establishment of a toll link to Wellington, the commercial heart of the dominion.[114] A high proportion of Christchurch's telephones were in businesses, and their operation was speeded in September, 1929, when the local exchange was automated.[115] The steady growth in business connections received something of a setback during the depression - even the city council dispensed with some of its extensions - but it was soon resumed.[116] There was also some use of

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112. Census, 1926, Vol.9, p.50; 1936, Vol.10, p.51, 59.

113. Unless otherwise stated, national figures for occupations are calculated from Census, 1926, Vol.9, p.44-50; 1936, Vol.10, p.38-51 (males), 52-59 (females).

114. AJHR, 1926, F1, p.2, 27-28.

115. AJHR, 1930, F1, p.48-49.

116. The total number of connections in Christchurch fell by less than five per cent between 1931 and 1933, having risen over a quarter since 1926. The 1931 total was again reached by the middle of 1935. Figures for each engineering district show that the number of extension telephones (overwhelmingly in businesses) fell far less than the number of "main stations" and recovered within a year, both in Canterbury and throughout the country. AJHR, 1926-36, F1.

electrical calculating machines.[117] More importantly, many aspects of the new technology encouraged the growth of office work. Better communications, faster transport, greater and more varied production, increased consumption, the expansion of hire-purchase for the new home appliances and motor cars, vast new capital investments in plant and infrastructure, and the domination of the new technology by international firms all fostered the growth of private and public bureaucracies. Furthermore, increased efficiency in production meant more wealth to be distributed and some to be redistributed. Employers could afford to record more, delegate more, and to isolate themselves more in congenial surroundings with "nice" and generally sympathetic employees. With the minor exception of the law clerks, every clerical occupation recorded for males in the Christchurch Urban Area in both 1926 and 1936 Censuses showed an increase.[118] The greatest growth in absolute terms occurred amongst general clerks (1222 to 1454) and public service clerks (515 to 646). The biggest percentage increases in employment were to be found amongst public service clerical, professional and administrative officers (80 to 102 or 27.5%), public service clerks (25%) and bank clerks (187 to 234 or 25%). In most cases the growth in such occupations in the dominion as a whole was considerably greater than that in Christchurch. For example, the number of male public service clerks throughout the country rose by 33% while the number of male general clerks

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117. Photograph in MED, Annual Report and Statement of Accounts, 1930.

118. Unless otherwise stated, figures for occupations in the Christchurch Urban Area are calculated from Census, 1926, Vol.9, p.55-57 (males), p.58-59 (females); 1936, Vol.10, p.64-67 (males), 68 (females).

by 37%. Despite the rise in numbers, these occupations showed far less of a fall in income than did most categories of wage and salary earners. Bank clerks were one of the very few groups to experience an increase in their incomes in money terms.[119] The average money incomes of public service clerks dropped by only about seven per cent, and cost accountants by eleven per cent.

The "mean" policeman was another individual to secure a higher nominal as well as real income between 1926 and 1936. His money income went up by over four per cent while the number of policemen rose by 14%. On balance, however, new technology had tended to make the work of the police more difficult. While headquarters enthused about the new science of fingerprinting which brought some important successes,[120] the "man on the beat" struggled to cope. He faced wholesale disregard at the often makeshift laws of the road but had little equipment with which to determine speed or sobriety, and had to commandeer motor transport if he wished to pursue the defiant. More importantly, increasing numbers of his criminal adversaries acquired cars or entered the new sport of joyriding in other people's. The problem of motorised crime brought nationwide notoriety to Christchurch with the depredations of the Gray brothers, two young men from a respectable background who caused immense damage in night-time robbery and arson about the city during 1929.[121] Possession

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119. Unless otherwise stated calculations of the incomes of occupational groups are derived from Census, 1926, Vol.11, p.8-39; 1936, Vol.12, p.88-104. The mean has been calculated in each case to the nearest pound rather than the nearest five pounds as in the "approximate mean" given in 1926. The 1926 figures take into account all "grades" employed in that occupation.

120. AJHR, 1930, H16, p.4.

121. Press, 15, 16 January, 1930.

of a motor car appears to have facilitated their rapid escape on a number of occasions and it was largely chance that a young policeman on foot managed to apprehend them during a robbery.

The direct effect of the new technology on levels of employment in retailing appears to have been even less than in office work. Nevertheless, there were immense changes in the structure of the retail industry due to the indirect effects of technological change. Between 1926 and 1936 there was a massive swing away from small, often owner-operated businesses towards larger operations employing a number of salesmen and assistants. This trend ran counter to the traditional impetus provided by depressions. Such crises had traditionally compelled unemployed people to go out on their own rather than use up their savings on day to day consumption while waiting for work.[122] The provision of state unemployment relief may have discouraged such a movement to some extent in the 'thirties, but changes in technology were the principal influence operating against the small businessman. Mass production methods, whose spread was greatly assisted by electrical machinery, increased the opportunities for bulk buying and at the same time increased the range of goods available to the consumer of average means. Improved motor goods transport had a similar effect, while the motor car and new forms of public transport assisted suburban buyers to shop in the department stores of the

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122. T. Vigne and A.Hawkins, "The Small Shopkeeper in Industrial and Market Towns", in G. Crossick (Ed.), The Lower Middle Class in Britain, London, 1977, p.187.

central city. The costs of eye-catching advertising in mass circulation newspapers, neon signs, illuminated displays behind plate glass windows, chrome-plated cabinets, and bright electric lighting throughout shops had all come down considerably. Yet expenditure on such innovations still seemed a large and risky expense to the cautious small businessman, if he could ever afford them at all. Although there was undoubtedly still a market for the small trader with a reputation for quality and service, the large stores maintained sufficiently high standards for their wider range of goods, their cheaper prices, and above all their air of excitement and modernity, to make the difference. At the same time, many of the new electrical and motor appliances available required considerable capital from the retailer. They were generally costly items and were increasingly sold to customers through hire-purchase arrangements. Specialised staff was often required to service these expensive mechanical gadgets. Whereas a cabinet-maker or a tinsmith had been able to establish himself with little more than his own skills, the tools of his trade and a limited amount of basic material, a seller of radios or motor cars needed a good deal of capital.

The resulting fall in the number of retailers in such categories as storekeeping, drapery and pharmaceuticals was particularly noticeable in urban areas. Over New Zealand as a whole the number of storekeepers fell by thirty per cent. In the four main centres the decrease was 45% and in Christchurch it was 49%. In the case of drapery and soft-goods, the respective figures were 23%, 33% and 30%. At two per cent, the increase in the number of grocers in both

Christchurch and the four main centres as a whole was less than that of the total workforce and that of grocers throughout the dominion at fifteen and ten per cent respectively. These declines in the number of self-employed retailers must be set against an increase in the employment of shop assistants and salespeople which was massive both in absolute and proportionate terms. The number of shop assistants in New Zealand rose from around fifteen thousand to about twenty-four thousand, an increase of more than sixty per cent. The number of salespersons rose by over two thousand, or over a quarter. Although these increases were accompanied by enormous reductions in average incomes - by around 46% in the case of male shop assistants - there had clearly been a substantial shift in the proportion of the national wage and salary bill towards the retail sector, despite the depression. A disproportionate amount of the increase in this employment took place outside the main centres, suggesting that provincial retailers were not only surviving better than their urban counterparts but were employing more labour. They did not have to face so much competition from big department stores.

New technology was clearly creating many jobs as well as displacing them. Not only did major categories of work such as retailing and office work swell in size, but specific occupations in other areas experienced an influx of workers. Blacksmithing might have been in decline, but motor maintenance was burgeoning; where there had been draymen there were now lorry drivers; and thousands of electricians and linesmen were needed to maintain the flow of mechanical energy previously provided by stokers and general labourers. However,

although this mitigated the employment effects of the changes, it certainly did not remove them.

In the first place the new technology was so much more efficient in its use of labour that an extremely rapid rise in consumption would have been necessary to create the number of new jobs necessary to replace those rendered redundant. This position was not achieved during the 'thirties, even under the Labour government. Despite very large increases in public service employment, much greater government spending in other areas, and the forty-hour week, thousands of men remained on social security who would have been "gainfully employed" during similar good times in earlier years, albeit mostly at low wages.

Then again, many of the jobs created by the new technology were temporary, concerned primarily with putting the new infrastructure and new machinery in place. For example, a vast number of labourers found employment as linesmen during the 'twenties as the new electric power boards quickly wove their webs across the country. Between 1926 and 1936, however, the number of linesmen and wiremen in New Zealand fell by almost a third. The number of men employed in stone quarries (mostly providing road metal) dropped by a similar proportion. As early as 1929 the Labour Department was noting that the completion of much infrastructural work was having a considerable effect on employment.[123]

Finally, the servicing and operating of the new technology required new sets of skills - and generally a

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123. AJHR, 1929, H11, p.2.

higher level of skill than the technology it displaced. A man who had spent a considerable part of his working life shovelling coal into a furnace stood little chance of retraining as a motor engineer or an electrician. Generally it was the male school-leaver, typically from a skilled working class background, who entered these fields. Their parents had the contacts, the money and the determination to help them to secure an apprenticeship and to support them financially through it. Older men lacked these advantages and had normally acquired family responsibilities of their own which could not be met on an apprentice's allowance. Apprenticeship also involved a junior social status in the workplace which sat uneasily on an adult. In a few cases these problems were overcome by the state funding of apprenticeships for returned servicemen. The Christchurch M.E.D. trained a number of men under this scheme, and one of them, H. Urlwin, was to establish a large electrical manufacturing and retail business.[124] It was also sometimes possible for older men who had built up capital and skills in areas such as blacksmithing or cycle repairs to move into the motor repair business. On the other hand, the capital value of some older forms of enterprise had declined considerably by the mid-'twenties, and continued to decline thereafter. Furthermore, younger men were generally more interested in the new technology - much of their spare time might well be spent tinkering with motor bikes or radios.

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124. Press, 9 July, 1983.

In the case of the white-collar occupations which were growing so rapidly, there was a class barrier. A survey of applicants under the age of twenty-five on the Labour Department's unemployed registers on 26 July, 1929,[125] suggests that while individuals employed in commercial and clerical jobs on leaving school might "slip down" into labouring occupations, there was little or no movement the other way. At least fourteen of the sixty-five men in the sample who had begun their working lives in commercial and clerical occupations were now in essentially unskilled categories. On the other hand none of the twenty-seven clerks and shop assistants had begun work in manual occupations. Amongst the categories of work created by the new technology, motor-driving was the most omnivorous in its appetite for new recruits. Most of the unemployed drivers had begun work as labourers or in farming (probably as farm labourers) but a number had been employed in skilled work and even the commercial and clerical category. All the seven electrical workers in the sample had begun work as apprentices, two of them in different occupations. All three of the mechanics had been recruited as apprentices from school. With the exception of the thirteen who had become drivers (at best a semi-skilled occupation), and one in the tailoring trade, all the 150 unemployed who had entered the workforce as labourers had remained in unskilled occupations. The number of individuals in each occupational sample was quite small and because it was a study of unemployed men the survey was biased towards failure. Nevertheless, it indicates

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125. AJHR, 1929, H11B, p.34.

that the unskilled, the very group worst hit both by technological change and the depression, was also the group least likely to be recruited into the occupations expanded by the new technology. It seems probable that unskilled men over the age of twenty-five found the transition even more difficult to achieve.

There were certainly some indications by 1926 that unemployment was becoming a significant problem even in comparatively prosperous times. During the 1925-26 year the levels of exporting, importing, farm production and building activity were all of record levels. Yet the proportion of "actively employed persons" describing themselves as unemployed in the census of April, 1926, was almost as great as that at a similar time in 1921.[126] Then economic conditions had been much more difficult and the total of unplaced applicants at the Labour Department's employment bureaux roughly twice as high.[127] In addition to a large increase in the rate of unemployment amongst old skilled trades such as blacksmithing and leather-working, the gap between the unemployment rate for labourers and the general rate had widened between 1921 and 1926.[128] The number of

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126. The figure was 26 per thousand in 1921; 24 per thousand in 1926. Census, 1926, Vol.10, p.7.

127. CSO, Prices, Wages, etc., 1926, p.62; AJHR, 1929, H11B, p.24-25.

128. The rate of unemployment amongst blacksmiths had increased from 2.7% to 3.3%, and that amongst leatherworkers from 0.5% to 3.0%. In addition, there had been a drop in the numbers giving those trades as their occupations. The rate of unemployment amongst labourers was 4.3% in 1921, 7.7% in 1926. This was 1.5 and 3.2 times the general male rate for the respective censuses. Census, 1921, Part 8, p.145-59, 123-137; 1926, Vol.10, p.7-14.

registered unemployed continued to climb each year following the sudden downturn in activity during the winter of 1926. A preponderance of those registered were labourers and their domination of the totals tended to increase. "Unskilled labour" made up 53% of those registered during early July, 1927, but 63% of those on the Labour Department's books at the same time in 1929.[129] The level of unemployment amongst skilled trade unionists tended to fall as spending by the United Government stimulated activity but the level amongst the unskilled fell much less.[130] The displacement of so many labouring jobs by electrical and motorised machinery was becoming evident.

Paradoxically, the very high rates of unemployment brought about by the depression may well have smoothed some of the difficulties faced by those made redundant by new technology. Not only did it probably help to reduce their sense of individual failure and social isolation, it forced local and central government to provide new forms of assistance for all unemployed men. Without these the older and less fit of the technologically displaced would have been condemned to steadily longer periods of unemployment, progressively lower incomes, constant begging for jobs, separation from home and family to search for work in the country, the diminution of savings for their old age, and, in all likelihood, a shameful resort to the local hospital board for charitable aid.

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129. CSO, Prices..., 1927, p.61; AJHR, 1929, H11B, p.30.

130. In 1927 General Labourers' Unions reported an average quarterly level of unemployment of 16.6% as against 10.1% by all unions. In 1929 the respective figures were 18.9% and 8.4%. "Shipping and cargo-working" unions recorded a 25% average level of unemployment in both years. CSO, op.cit., 1927, p.62; 1929, p.62.

Between 1926 and 1929 local authorities provided very large amounts of relief work, substantially assisted by government subsidies.[131] This work relieved many urban unemployed, particularly those with families, of the need to travel far from home in search of casual jobs. The provision of thousands of positions at award rates on public works for the unemployed in 1929 meant adequate, secure incomes for displaced workers able to move away from home. Through the Unemployment Act of 1930 central government guaranteed an income for all unemployed men prepared and able to work. The Unemployment Board, created to administer the Act, gradually came to accept that the unemployed should be allowed to take paid employment outside of their days on relief work.[132] A very large number did earn extra money in this way.[133] Many would have been technologically displaced workers who were thus enabled to follow their trades in a limited way. There was usually some satisfaction in the relief work provided as well. Although some No.5 Scheme jobs were unconstructive and the

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131. During 1928-29, for instance, the Christchurch City Council spent a total of £19,665 on unemployment relief, but £7973 of that amount came from Public Works Department subsidies and only £7327 from its own accounts. A further £4165 was contributed by the private Citizens' Unemployment Committee and £200 from the local Returned Servicemen's Association. Christchurch City Council, Balance Sheet and Statements, 1929.

132. Shortly after the introduction of the No.5 Scheme the local Labour Department made strong attempts to trace other income. Sun, 28 March, 1931. Nevertheless, the local head of the department, R.T. Bailey, gave repeated assurances that casual earnings did not penalise relief workers. Times, 12 July, 1932; Press, 22 November, 1932. The Board gave the same assurances. Sun, 4 April, 1934. Certainly this was in keeping with the Unemployment Board's declared policy to encourage the "efforts of the individual to supplement his measure of relief by every means in his power". AJHR, 1932, H35, p.12.

133. AJHR, 1935, H35, p.2.

methods and the rates of pay could lead to anger and frustration, projects such as the Summit Road, the McCormack's Bay Causeway, and the stopbanks along the Waimakariri were clearly of some considerable social value. Certainly more so than a fruitless door-to-door search for odd jobs. A man was after all still working and he could maintain contact with fellow workers in the same situation. He did not have to feel he was begging for charity. A further option was provided with the advent of sustenance pay, envisaged in the 1930 Act but only brought into operation in 1933. Redundant workers could now retire early without facing either labouring relief work or destitution and the hospital board.

The measures introduced by the United and Coalition governments to provide for the depression unemployed actually represented a much wider advance in social welfare. Although the Unemployment Act was clearly framed with able-bodied unemployed in mind, in practice its benefits became available to a large proportion of those whose capacity to work had been reduced by sickness, accident or old age.

Previously large numbers of these men had had to depend on a combination of charity and whatever casual work they could get. With the partial exception of miners, returned servicemen and the blind, the only state benefit disabled men could expect was the Old Age Pension.[134] The qualifying age for the pension for men was sixty-five, roughly equivalent to the male life expectancy. Yet many were suffering from chronic disabilities long before the qualifying age, having

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134. NZYB, 1929, p.669-78.

lived through times in which harsh living and working conditions were standard and medical treatment rudimentary. With limited mechanisation, constant heavy lifting and repeated accidents tended to leave a legacy of hernias, weak backs, poorly knitted bones, and stomach ulcers which greatly reduced a manual worker's efficiency. Labouring men working in the bush or on farms were also liable to suffer from the effects of a restricted diet, prolonged over-indulgence in alcohol - the great painkiller - and poor cooking. Housewives in town often found that it was not difficult to be a bad cook on a coal range - and it was much easier over an open fire.

Even at sixty-five a man might be obliged, or feel obliged, to continue working. Applicants for the pension had to have spent most of the previous twenty-five years in New Zealand, a provision which excluded many immigrants and footloose locals for a further period. Pensioners were subject to a strict means test and were examined under oath in front of a magistrate. They then had to make an annual declaration of their income and property in each subsequent year. Some eligible men baulked at such a searching examination, preferring to continue to work as long as possible. The level of savings allowed was not high - the pension began to be abated at about the level of the average amount lodged in Post Office Savings Accounts.[135] On the other hand, pensioners were allowed to earn up to twelve shillings a week over and above their pension. Some less respectable applicants

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135. Every complete £10 over £50 of savings led to a reduction of £1 in the pension. The average amount in Post Office Savings Bank accounts was £58. Ibid., p.670, 722.

had other problems, despite the fact that they were less likely to have saved much to support themselves in their old age. They could be rejected on the grounds of four convictions for comparatively minor offences during the previous twelve years or the desertion of a spouse within that period. The requirement to be "of good moral character" and to have led "a sober and reputable life" during the preceding twelve months also presented problems for some.

Men over sixty-five who did not qualify for the pension joined younger men unable to earn enough to keep themselves and their families due to sickness or disability. These individuals were generally forced to depend on a mixture of casual work and charity. Savings, benefits from friendly societies or trade unions, and legal compensation could help in certain cases. "Charity", often with an accompanying stigma, came in many forms. Relatives were probably the main source of such support. They were in fact legally obliged to assist if they could. But many households were unable to keep an additional adult, still less an additional family, and immigrants often had no relatives in New Zealand anyway. Religious institutions tended to concentrate their charitable work on short-term assistance or on specific groups such as orphans, widows and the very elderly. Adult men facing destitution or unable to keep their families were usually obliged to seek charitable aid at the local hospital board.

For many this tended to be a very painful process psychologically. Although about half the funds disbursed in the form of charitable aid were provided by central government, the representatives of the ratepayers remained anxious to discharge their legal duty by detecting and

detering any malingering. At Christchurch Hospital applicants were interviewed every month, their assets were carefully determined and liens could be taken over any property they owned in order to secure repayment of assistance.[136] A staff of inspectors was retained to make spot checks on the honesty of recipients, and able-bodied male applicants were required to work in return for any relief granted. They were normally sent to assist the staff in the nearby Botanical Gardens. Payment was not ordinarily in the form of cash, but in rations issued from the hospital's store. The Board maintained that this increased the level of assistance because it could provide goods at wholesale prices.[137] Nevertheless, the practice took still more freedom and dignity away from the destitute and was bitterly resented as a form of "truck" by a number of the unemployed.[138] The rate of assistance was anyway very low and the Charitable Aid Committee emphasised that its grants were not intended to equate to a living wage.[139] Men were expected to find casual work to make up the difference.

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136. Times, 6 May, 1930.

137. Press, 28 October, 1926.

138. Sun, 27 October, 1926. The debate resumed strongly in 1930 with solicitors acting for one leader of the unemployed, W.H. Bayard, writing to the Health Department questioning the legality of this "truck" system. The Crown Law Office considered that the practice was probably illegal but that a court would throw the case out as "trivial". The board continued to require work and the Law Office's opinion was not divulged to the unemployed or to trade unions which joined the protest. James McCombs requested a copy of the paragraph claiming that a court would dismiss the case so that he could prove to the unemployed that there was no point in taking action. Health Department Files, 54/49/10.

139. Food was "awarded sparingly enough to leave the applicant with an incentive to improve his condition". Times, 6 May, 1930.

The existing system of social welfare thus tended to support the development of a substantial casual workforce which was subject to long periods of unemployment due to sickness and which was generally unable to work with the same efficiency as its able-bodied counterparts. Some ten thousand wage and salary earners, over three per cent of the total, were unemployed for over a quarter of the working days in 1925-26 due to sickness, accident or injury.[140] Almost the same proportion of men working on their own account were similarly affected. After all, much lost time due to sickness and lack of employment could only be expected in a workforce where at least three per cent of male wage and salary earners were older than sixty-three years, the average male life expectancy.[141] More than ten per cent were in excess of fifty-five years old. Unskilled manual workers were particularly well-represented in these older age-groups.[142] For instance, wage-earning labourers were almost as likely to be over sixty-five in 1926 as medical practitioners, a group renowned for its late starting but long working life in generally comfortable and unstrenuous conditions. Similarly a waterside worker was more likely to be over fifty-five than his doctor. Gardening work was the haven for an especially large proportion of elderly wage-earners, with almost eighteen per cent over sixty-five. Just under a third of self-employed gardeners fell into that age-group.

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140. Calculated from figures in Census, 1926, Vol.10, p.14.

141. NZYB, 1930, p.144; and Census, 1926, Vol.9, p.84.

142. The following figures are calculated from Ibid, p.62-64, 66-69, 75-84.

Depressed economic conditions tended to worsen the lot of these elderly or handicapped workers by bringing them into greater competition with younger and fitter men.[143] On the other hand, they were often able to take advantage of the community's attempts to provide unemployment relief, whether in the form of work or goods. From 1926 onwards there were complaints that many of the men on relief work were unsuitable for heavy labour - even though a substantial majority of the unemployed described themselves as labourers and as fit for such work. The P.W.D. in particular found itself dealing with a very different group from the robust, if often disreputable, workers with whom it was familiar. In October, 1926, the P.W.D. Engineer in Christchurch, W. McNamara, summed up the winter's relief work with some bitterness.[144] The men offered were often "of a very poor class...many unused to heavy manual labour...some totally unfit". Similarly, the Christchurch City Engineer claimed in his report for the 1927-28 year that

> one significant fact that has disclosed itself as a result of recurring unemployment is that there are quite a large number of men who may be said to be 'unemployable' from either a physiological or a psychological standpoint... or both.[145]

Technically such men should have been the responsibility of the hospital board. However, they were presenting themselves and being accepted for work on relief projects at much higher rates of cash payment than they would have received on charitable aid.

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143. Sun, 7 June, 1933.

144. Press, 22 October, 1926.

145. Christchurch City Council, City Engineer's Report, 1928, p.62.

The proportion of the registered unemployed described as "fit for light work only" remained relatively constant at around twelve per cent from June, 1928.[146] As little such work was available as unemployment relief it was not in the interests of men seeking assistance to get themselves classified in that way even if it were a fair assessment of their capabilities. However, the light brigade was in the van of the rush to register following Sir Joseph Ward's promise to find state jobs at award rates for all the registered unemployed.[147] Their proportion of the total increased within a month to around twenty per cent.[148] This dropped back again when it became evident that most of the work being made available involved labouring and after the Labour Department purged many men from the register when they declined to leave town for employment on distant public works.[149] It seems likely that many "light" workers returned to eking out a living from whatever casual employment or charitable aid they could get.

Men classified as fit for light work only again featured disproportionately in the next big rise in unemployment registrations, towards the end of 1930. From a low-point of

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146. Calculated from figures in CSO, Monthly Abstract of Statistics, June to December, 1929, Table 2. The Monthly Abstract is also the best source for Christchurch and national unemployment statistics from the beginning of 1926. CSO, Wages, Prices, etc. 1924, p.137-39 takes these figures back to the spring of 1921. AJHR, 1929, H11B, p.24-25 gives national registrations to April, 1921.

147. Times, 30 September, 1929. The effect of Ward's announcement was startling. Within a fortnight the national total of registered unemployed increased against the seasonal trend, from 2466 to 6264. In Christchurch there were 438 registrations on one day whereas the previous record had been less than a hundred. Sun, 4 October, 1929.

148. CSO, Prices... 1929, p.62.

149. Sun, 31 October, 2 November, 1929. By the end of December registrations were down to 1242 nationally, less than at the same time in 1928.

8% of registrations in May, they increased to 14% in December.[150] Once again it appears to have been the prospect of paid work for all the unemployed that was the stimulus. This time it was made clear by the newly-formed Unemployment Board that work would be provided in urban areas, through local authorities. Where suitable work could not be supplied, there was an apparent assurance of sustenance payments. In the event these were not paid, and almost all relief workers were expected to do labouring work of varying degrees of difficulty. In Christchurch the "light" workers tended to be put onto scrub clearance and tree-planting in the Bottle Lake Reserve, north of the city.[151]

Care for the sick, aged and otherwise handicapped men remained the responsibility of the hospital boards. In addition they were called on to assist most relief workers during their stand-down week each month. This placed enormous pressure on the boards as they attempted to maintain their usual restrictions and checks in the distribution of relief. A man and his family could not be regarded as destitute simply because they qualified for assistance from the Unemployment Board. Each applicant had to be examined every month by a charitable aid committee and a large number were further checked by inspectors who could call at their homes without notice. The requirement of a monthly interview led to serious overcrowding at the hospital board's offices each Thursday ("charitable aid day"):

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150. CSO, Prices..., 1930, p.59.

151. Times, 13 February, 1931.

> In a portion of the office where not thirty people could comfortably be accommodated there are grouped over a hundred men and women... Every inch of room was taken up and the office staff had to push through the throng to shepherd the applicants into the committee room or to the ration room...Many of the people were almost at the end of their tether and the long wait in a close atmosphere was obviously telling on their nerves.[152]

The situation greatly worsened as unemployment grew during 1931 and 1932, particularly with the advent of the "stand-down" week each month for relief workers. On one day there were over six hundred applicants at the hospital board.[153]

By the beginning of 1932 there was considerable concern in the Health Department and on the part of J.G. Coates, Minister in Charge of Unemployment, that some hospital boards were unable to carry out their normally rigorous checks on all applications for assistance.[154] Furthermore, a number of board - notably those in Auckland and Wellington - were not requiring work from the able-bodied unemployed in return for rations granted during the stand-down week. The possible danger to public order of having large numbers of unemployed men in crowds outside hospital board offices also caused disquiet, but mainly inasmuch as it might sometimes allow them to get additional relief:

> Coates was of the opinion that it only required a mob of men to come along and they got what they wanted...He had three or four instances where, as a result of demonstrating, what was wanted had been obtained. It was clear that they had to be pacified. It was going to come to a head. There were politicians to-day drawing definite attention to this matter and saying there were

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152. Times, 22 August, 1930.

153. Press, 17 April, 1931. A month later the police were called to clear the crowd outside the offices. Times, 22 May, 1931.

154. Memorandum for the Minister of Health from the Director-General of Health, 6 January, 1932, Health Department Files 54/49/10; report of a meeting between a deputation from the Hospital Boards Association and members of the government, including G. Forbes and J.G. Coates, 14 January, 1932, 54/49/10.

> plenty of clothes and food in the country and it was paradoxical that people should be starving. Those were seeds of revolution.[155]

Coates was already planning a new centralised system of relief, based around the Unemployment Board, and able to resist demands by the able-bodied for relief without work. It would end the stand-down week and relieve the hospital boards of a substantial burden. However, the thoughtful and energetic leader of Reform Party was dissatisfied:

> The practice of Hospital Boards, I understand, is to give to the unemployed in their stand-down week, and often for additional periods, orders for specified commodities, but very little money that might be ill-spent. If now we simply eliminate the stand-down week by making able-bodied unemployed a charge on the Unemployment Fund, we shall lose the elements of value in the methods devised by Hospital Boards.
>
> There is another good reason for making use of the idea advanced by your correspondent [Mr. Wyvern Wilson]. It is difficult to devise a scale of relief that will be at once barely adequate for city needs and not over generous in country districts. We cannot give a single man in Wellington much less than 18/- weekly (conditional, of course, on his working the prescribed time - and I am more than ever convinced that the "prescribed time" must amount to not less than 5 days weekly),...
>
> On the other hand we cannot differentiate in cash payments between city and country, for this would attract people to the cities.
>
> A way of escape from the difficulty, perhaps the only one, is to give less in cash and more in orders for food etc. in the cities.[156]

Much of the planning for the new system was completed during March, 1932,[157] and it was introduced in July.

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155. Ibid.

156. Memorandum for the Minister of Health from the Minister in Charge of Unemployment, 6 February, 1932, Health Department Files, 54/49/10. Coates clearly had no scruples about "truck". His slogan might well have been "less pay for more work".

157. Memorandum for the Ministers of Unemployment and Health from R.M. Campbell and A.V. Keisenberg, 9 March, 1932, Health Department Files, 54/49/10. Also statement by J.G. Coates, 23 March, 1932, AJHR, 1932, H35A, p.3.

Under it the Unemployment Board took full responsibility for men who were fit for either light or heavy work. Those unfit for any kind of work - classified "C" - were to be entirely the responsibility of the hospital boards.

In practice the distinction between fit relief workers and unfit charitable aid recipients became very difficult to maintain. Most men preferred to be on relief work - it paid better, principally in cash, involved no regular, searching examination before a committee, did not have the stigma of charity, and provided more of the social interaction that is one of the attractions of most work. It was generally the doctors employed by the hospital board who were responsible for grading men when there was some doubt as to their fitness.[158] Some of these doctors were almost certainly open to persuasion from the unfortunate individuals they were examining and had only a hazy idea of what sort of "light work" was available and to whom. This is clearly suggested by a local case which gained national publicity later.[159] During 1934 it was reported that a man had been pushed in a wheelchair by his wife to Bottle Lake in order to undertake his relief work on

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158. One of the reasons for this was that the local Labour Department put "little value on medical certificates" according to the officer in charge in Christchurch. Sun, 13 July, 1932. Similar views had been expressed earlier by a local member of the Unemployment Board, P.R. Climie. He claimed that forty per cent of single relief workers in Dunedin had secured medical certificates exempting them from work. Sun, 2 June, 1932. Presumably the exemption was from the camp-work introduced by Coates for the single unemployed at the beginning of the year.

159. W. Sutch, The Quest for Security in New Zealand, 1840-1966, Wellington, 1966, p.137; Times, 2 January, 1935.

two consecutive days.[160] Perhaps significantly, it was the foreman on the job who complained, not the individual involved or his wife. Technically he should have been on charitable aid or, quite conceivably, on sustenance "awaiting suitable work". But this would have entailed a substantially lower rate of pay. The doctor who had classified the man as fit for light work had possibly been led to believe that he would be put onto boot-repairing. It seems very possible that the relief worker had managed to get the classification he wanted.

During the same year a relief worker charged with operating a whisky-still revealed that he had experienced some difficulty in combining the roles of labourer and distiller when his relief work allowance was increased from one to two days.[161] His frequent absences from work appear to have led to his reclassification as class "C", unfit for work. This, however, meant much less cash and liability to a rigorous inspection without warning. A visit to the hospital and "the doctor who made out my medical certificate modified it to class "B". The most likely result of such a classification, transference to sustenance pay, meant few interruptions to attend relief work and no snooping by hospital board inspectors.

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160. Sutch was clearly right in branding this case "administrative incompetence" but gives the rather misleading impressions that there was no alternative ("there was no invalidity pension and the principle laid down was 'no pay without work'") and that the situation was prolonged. Moreover, if many of the men at Bottle Lake were unfit and lacked tools, the city council was at least partly responsible - it could have provided more tools and it rejected a proposal that the men should be reclassified. Times, 25 May, 1934.

161. Star, 31 May, 6 June, 1935. Such transfers were very unpopular. For example, the local Returned Servicemen's Association protested against its disabled members being taken off "relief work" in 1934. Sun, 3, 16, 23 July, 1934.

The progressive introduction of sustenance payments had actually reduced the absurdity of the situation to some extent by making it unlikely that men classified for light work would have to do any work at all. Light tasks were particularly difficult for local bodies to provide at little cost for tools, housing and materials. Therefore it was this category of relief work that tended to be reduced first as local authorities shed their No.5 Scheme responsibilities and effectively transferred the men to sustenance.[162]

By 1935 the pretence that individuals on sustenance were merely fit men lacking work and therefore no charge on the hospital board had worn very thin. Claims that many were reporting to the Labour Department in ambulances were probably exaggerated, but there were strong protests against sustenance men having to visit the Labour bureau or post office three times a week, partly on humanitarian grounds.[163] One correspondent claimed that some

> have to go on sticks, being cripples; others have to pay long tram fares, and others again, by having to report on three days, lose some of the casual jobs which help them make a little more for their families to get along on.[164]

The height of absurdity was reached in June, 1935, when it was argued that men going into hospital should be able to continue to collect sustenance payments from the Unemployment Board.[165] In support of the proposal, the secretary of the North Canterbury Hospital Board pointed out that the

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162. Star, 6 November, 1934.

163. Star-Sun, 24 August, 1935.

164. Star, 11 February, 1935.

165. Star, 28 June, 1935.

charitable aid it provided was "not usual[ly]... on the same scale as sustenance payments". The failure by both local and central authorities to provide a reasonable allowance for sick breadwinners had led to a situation where a man lying in a hospital bed could be described as "fit for light work".

The same development can be seen in the response to the questionnaire on unemployment in the 1936 census. Time lost by men through accident or illness had fallen from an average of nineteen days in 1925-26 to just over twelve in 1935.[166] A little of the difference can be put down to the genuine increase in unemployment due to scarcity of work - with less work to do there was less to lose due to sickness and a possible reduction in the danger of work-related accidents. It is also possible that depressed economic times encouraged workers to undertake work even when they were sick. On the other hand, very few employees enjoyed rights to sick pay in 1925-26, so even then a day off work had meant a substantial loss of wages. Rather it seems likely that the decrease in the loss of working time due to sickness arose from the way that the system of unemployment relief had developed. Men who could not get regular work because of their ill-health stated as much in 1926. Ten years later such individuals were likely to be on sustenance, officially declared "fit for light work" but unemployed because the authorities could not find suitable work for them. Consequently they recorded themselves as unemployed due to scarcity of work.

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166. Census, 1926, Vol.10, p.21; 1936, Vol.11, p.28.

The fact that such individuals continued to be classified as unemployed was an important cause of the prolongation of high unemployment during the 'thirties. Sick and handicapped men, located mainly in urban areas, were poor candidates for public works jobs in comparatively remote locations. Neither were they suitable for retraining in the skills of the new technology when there were easily sufficient young men offering with long working lives ahead of them.

The solution adopted by both the Coalition and Labour governments was to transfer the older and handicapped unemployed onto pensions. By the middle of 1934 men between sixty and sixty-five years of age were being given sustenance "in anticipation" of the old age pension or if their wives were on it and at the end of the year men over sixty-five were effectively denied any help from the Unemployment Board.[167] Men over fifty years of age and those "under fifty per cent efficient" were granted sustenance - effectively a pension - if they chose.[168] As local bodies

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167. Sun, 29 December, 1934. The process had actually begun earlier, as exemplified by the case of J.A. McCullough, a former Workers' Representative on the Arbitration Court. Despite Sullivan's efforts on his behalf, this seventy-three year old was tossed off relief work and onto the old age pension in 1933. Christchurch City Council, Outward Correspondence, 2 August, 1933.

168. Sun, 15 June, 1934. In explaining the rules regarding sustenance, Walter Bromley, secretary of the Unemployment Board, coincidentally pointed to the way in which Christchurch local bodies, not least the Labour City Council, were failing the unemployed. He mentioned that "in two main centres" (Press, 7 June, 1934) sufficient light work had not been provided for all those registered:

> the board had, in Christchurch, for instance, provided that when sufficient employment was not arranged to employ the whole of the men registered and eligible for relief, that work should be given in rotation amongst the men - a section standing down each week...During that stand-down week it had been the practice to pay a small sustenance allowance equal to fifty per cent of what they would earn if they were in employment. (Sun, 6 June, 1934).

(Continued on next page)

discarded "light work" and selected the fittest men for full-time employment, the element of choice became hypothetical. Under Labour the period of residence required to be eligible for the old age pension was reduced to fifteen years. The introduction of an invalidity pension was foreshadowed by the Coalition government at the end of June, 1935.[169] The new Minister of Labour, H.T. Armstrong, pushed the proposal strongly[170] and the new pension was introduced during 1935. It led to the reclassification of several thousand of the unemployed. However, it was the Social Security Act of 1938 that finally separated the unemployed due to lack of work and those redundant principally because of their physical incapacity. This largely removed the widely disliked system of charitable aid and effected a substantial reduction in the number of registered unemployed at the cost of a large increase in the number of recipients of social welfare.

In 1926 the state provided less than fifty thousand pensions which were supposed to meet most or all of the living expenses of the pensioner and his or her dependants. In 1937 it provided over ninety thousand such pensions, not including unemployment pay or sustenance. In 1939 the total was over 140,000.[171] There was a significant aging of the population during this period, but the combined total of men

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168. (Continued) See also statement by P.R. Climie on a special arrangement, "applied only to Christchurch, where local bodies have been unable to absorb all the men eligible for relief work". Times, 24 August, 1932.

169. Sun, 26 June, 1935.

170. Star-Sun, 6 January, 1936.

171. NZYB, 1926, p.650-55; 1937, p.590-600; 1940, p.619-39.

over 65 years and women over 60 years increased only 46%,[172] a far lower rate than the rise in dependence on the state. The provision of charitable aid must also be taken into account. However, the total number of charitable aid "cases" supported during the 1925-26 year was only 6089.[173] At any one time it would obviously have been much lower, and large numbers of the "breadwinners" amongst those cases would have been obliged to find extra work during the period of assistance and possibly in return for it as well. Furthermore, some account must be taken of the nineteen thousand individuals on sustenance in March, 1937, and the six thousand on unemployment benefits in March, 1939.[174] Clearly a very substantial slice of the most casual and least efficient workers had been largely removed from the labour force.

Essentially the depression had hastened the development of a structure through which large sections of the workforce rendered redundant by new technology could be sustained by the estate. The new system of social welfare allowed recipients to maintain a much greater degree of dignity than the previous locally based structure. It also ensured that some of the additional wealth being created by the new technology should be channelled both to those it displaced and to those who had previously been neglected; the sick and the handicapped. These men had now been largely removed from the workforce - whether they liked it or not - and their

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172. Census, 1926, Vol.3, p.10; 1936, Vol.4, p.4.

173. Figure compiled from a table entitled "Cases and Number of Persons Affected Respectively from Various Causes of Poverty", Health Department Files, 54/49/10.

174. NZYB, 1938, p.804; 1940, p. 635.

contribution to production replaced by new machinery.

In the meantime the depression had created a vast new form of employment in the shape of relief work. It is difficult to travel around Christchurch without seeing the legacy of such work. To the north much of the network of stopbanks along the Waimakariri and the extensive Bottle Lake Plantation represent the efforts of thousands of unemployed men. To the south thousands more have a magnificent monument in the form of the Summit Road and the Sign of the Takahe. In the west there is the Wigram Aerodrome and in the east the road across McCormack's Bay, the Estuary Road, the Sumner Esplanade and golf courses at Brighton and North Beach. Stopbanks along the Heathcote, a wide sweep of roading along the Avon, and parks from Burwood to Beckenham were constructed largely by relief workers. They did much more than weed-chipping along roadsides.[175]

Nevertheless, there was an air of irrelevance about much of the relief work carried out within the urban area. This was above all because the methods employed were so primitive, so clearly designed to use the maximum amount of labour at a time when labour-saving machinery had become standard on such works. For example, the Waimakariri River Trust pointed out that seven men and a mechanical dragline could accomplish as much as three hundred of its relief workers using shovels, barrows and drays.[176] Local bodies, the main employing authorities under the No.5 Scheme, sought

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175. Private institutions in Christchurch which benefitted from the "over the fence" variant of the No.5 Scheme ranged from the St.Albans Park Bowling Club and the Oxford Terrace Baptist Tennis Club to the Phillipstown Kindergarden and the Methodist Orphanage. Unemployment Board, Minutes, 25-26 July, 19 October, 1934.

176. Star, 31 March, 1932.

to minimise their share of the cost of relief work, the provision of tools, materials and supervision.[177] Yet most of the major projects which they would have undertaken in the absence of the economic crisis, including road reconstruction, required all three. Therefore "make-work" jobs did tend to creep in.

The Christchurch seaside borough of New Brighton furnished some extreme examples of the problems that could arise as a result of restricted local financing of relief work. The borough had become the haven for hundreds of Christchurch unemployed and their families, attracted by the low or non-existent rents for accommodation in holiday baches. The council strove to provide as much relief work as possible, even assisting single men, a group largely spurned by the Christchurch City Council. Yet the borough had considerable financial difficulties. In normal times its population had been under five thousand, it contained many undeveloped sections whose owners were quite prepared to relinquish them rather than meet a second rates bill, and a large part of the borough's territory was in reserves. Consequently New Brighton struggled to provide supervision for some 350 relief workers with a permanent staff of just

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177. A Metropolitan Relief Works Committee was established in Christchurch in 1932 to suggest large projects for No.5 Scheme work. It detailed a large number but was exasperated by the local bodies' reluctance to provide more than a small fraction of the total cost of any project. The chairman of the Committee, H. Kitson, pointed out that men were happier doing useful work and that "it was almost impossible to find work where the expenditure was all for labour". J.S. Barnett, a Labour city councillor, claimed that the Unemployment Board would soon be forced to pay for materials, just as it had been forced to pay all wages - presumably by the threat of thousands of unemployed being forced to seek hospital board charity or to starve. Times, 30 July, 1932. A copy of the Committee's report can be found in Howard Papers, 980/149.

over a dozen, only four of them being administrators.[178] These employees had to combine their existing duties with the supervision of relief workers.

One story, possibly apocryphal, is told of a New Brighton borough official who returned unexpectedly to a scrub-clearing job to collect a piece of surveying equipment. Unable to find the gang where he had left them, he called out, "Have you got the 'T'?" Back came the reply from deep in the scrub, "Yes, we've got the tea, have you got the milk and sugar?"[179]

Walter Bromley, the secretary of the Unemployment Board, sparked a crisis over the quality of supervision at New Brighton in 1934. A large proportion of the borough's relief workforce was then engaged on the construction of a golf course at the Rawhiti Domain. The job had already absorbed so much Unemployment Board money in wages that it was dubbed, perhaps by Bromley himself, "the Golden Golf-course". The board proposed to transfer the majority of the borough's relief workers, married as well as single, to work at the Ashley River, twenty miles to the north.[180] The plan obliged the men to stay in camp for at least a week at a time. The resulting public outcry brought together local body politicians, clergymen and leaders of unemployed workers' organisations.[181] Most of the men refused to go.[182]

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178. At one stage in 1934, the borough was employing 420. Press, 30 April, 1935.

179. Retold to the author by R. Greenaway.

180. Press, 4,9,19 October, 1934. Bromley claimed that New Brighton's lack of supervision was the worst he had seen. Sun, 11 October, 1934.

181. Sun, 5,8,12,19,20 October, 1934.

182. Press, 6 October, 1934.

As well as offending against an important tenet of what was becoming the dominant working-class set of values - the unity of the nuclear family - and depriving men of home comforts, it was widely believed that there were particular dangers to the wives of the unemployed in New Brighton. A.E. Armstrong talked of their being "left to the ravages of a certain section of young men who parade New Brighton during the summer".[183] The hospital board refused to provide the strikers with rations, but a number of private firms came forward with donations.[184] The dispute was eventually settled by making the orders to camp dependent on a medical certificate of fitness. Those unemployed graded as unfit were to be transferred to sustenance. With the assistance of a sympathetic doctor almost all the married men proved to be unfit:

> If they passed they went into the country...Were they physically fit for this? Perhaps. Were they fit psychologically to desert wife, home and family, in the crisis of destitution, at the very time when male support was most needed? No, they were not. In all of them was either the anxiety neurosis or its potential. The great majority were certified by me as unfit. Dr. Fox fully approved. So probably did many of my colleagues in other centres, for after a while married men were no longer sent to camp.[185]

Work on the Summit Road had also become notorious for lack of tools and lax oversight. Although at times over seven hundred men were employed there, the Summit Road Trust lacked the finance for anything more than minimal supervision.[186] Much of it was provided personally by

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183. Press, 24 October, 1934.

184. Sun, 27 October, 1934.

185. F.O. Bennett, A Canterbury Tale, Wellington, 1980, p.161.

186. See criticism of Justice Frazer in giving judgment for compensation to the widow of J. Banks, relief labourer. Times, 14 March, 1934.

Harry Ell, an eccentric Progressive Liberal from the days of Tommy Taylor, and the driving force behind the project. Late in 1933 the Unemployment Board insisted that the job be handed over to the Public Works Department's supervision.[187] Thereafter the work-rate appears to have been stepped up at the cost of some friction with the radical organisers on the job.[188] The Summit Road had tended to become the dumping ground for those relief workers who proved least amenable to discipline. It normally entailed the most arduous journey to and from work.

A factor which particularly afflicted work under the No. 5 Scheme was its part-time nature. Depending on the worker's family responsibilities, the number of days worked per week could vary between one and four at various times during the scheme's life. Workers were therefore more than usually alienated from their work, returning after a week or more to a different piece of ground and seldom being able to use the same tools. This effect was compounded when the Unemployment Board introduced a system of rotation of the men around the various relief jobs in the urban area.[189]

However, the low rate of pay on relief works, whether part-time in the city or full-time in camp, alienated the

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187. Press, 31 October, 1983. There were 750 men employed on the Summit Road at that stage.

188. There was something of a confrontation early in the new year when the organisers of a stop-work meeting found "twenty grinning policemen" awaiting them at the top of the hill. The local head of the PWD proceeded to threaten them with piecework. Star, 9, 10 January, 1935. Press, 15 January, 1934.

189. Sun, 28 July, 1931.

men still more. The effect was compounded by the imposition of a ten per cent cut in time, and therefore earnings, on relief work between 1932 and 1935.[190] This may have helped the board to finance full-time work and the provision of rations, blankets and boots, but it appears to have disgusted most of those left on No. 5 Scheme work. It seems to have particularly affected work on the McCormack's Bay Causeway, begun in 1932 and intended to be completed by the end of 1933. Ultimately it drifted to a conclusion some months into 1935. The City Engineer noted that

> Since the 10% cut was inflicted the output has steadily gone down from bad to worse, mostly because many of the workers are losing heart, taking no interest in their work and labouring under a keen sense of injustice. Sacking them even after repeated warnings has but little effect, for they are sent to work at other places and eventually come back to the old task again because of the rotational system of working. Men in this way have been discharged several times.[191]

Low pay was also a major reason for discontent in the single men's camps. These were established in 1932, partly to give what the farmers in government considered more productive work than they were getting in town - building country roads and supplying farm labour. They were also intended to get some of the more troublesome of the unemployed out of the main centres. The PWD was responsible for most of these camps and imposed its system of co-operative contracts on their work. Under this, gangs competed with each other for their share of the amount allocated for labour on the job. From 1932 to 1934 this amount was

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190. Times, 15, 19 November, 1932; AJHR, 1935, H35, p.19.

191. Christchurch City Council, City Engineer's Report, 1933, p.76.

calculated at ten shillings per man. Under co-operative contract conditions, less competent or less enthusiastic workers tended to get forced into a single gang which consequently earned much less than the ten shillings.[192] Some of the unemployed were of the type normally found on PWD Works, but many were not, and this encouraged a wide range of payment. One of the main demands in the dispute at the No.2 Camp at Glen Wye on the Lewis Pass in 1934 was for the formation of a single gang.[193]

Primitive living conditions were similarly a great cause for complaint, especially during the period in which the camps were being established. The Hilltop (Akaroa Road) camp in particular experienced such difficulties. Initial complaints included the two-mile walk to and from work, an inadequate water supply, deep mud due to poor drainage, and tent accommodation without flooring on an exposed site.[194] At the Lewis Pass works an unofficial commission sent by Sullivan early in 1934 found complaints about one of the two camps fully justified. They described many tents as "torn, ragged and draughty" and considered the food and storerooms to be "disgraceful". They also criticised the worn tents and low average pay at the small PWD camp at Lake Sumner.[195]

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192. One editor maintained that some men on the Lewis Pass received only 3/9d. Sun, 2 February, 1934. Shortly after these single men's camps had been first established, Coates emphasised that he had always intended that the pay would be merely an "allowance", not wages. Press, 27 November, 1931.

193. Sun, 12 February, 1934. The "co-operative contract" system of gangs competing for a fixed sum led to a strike at Hilltop within a fortnight when the men realised that they had not been guaranteed ten shillings a week and "found". Press, 24 September, 1931.

194. Press, 26 September, 1931; Times, 1 October, 1931.

195. Star, 2 February, 1934. Some other PWD camps appear to have been well-planned, including that at the Ashley River. Press, 8 June, 1933. Nevertheless, there was a dispute over payment for weekly transport back to Christchurch. Press, 17 September, 1933. Few protests emerged from the small camps at Motunau, Burnham or Waipara.

The local PWD must bear some of the blame for the level of complaint at its camps, as the Forestry Department had little trouble with its tree-planting gangs in the Hanmer area which involved at least as many men over a longer period.[196] The same commission that condemned the Lewis Pass camps reported favourably on the forestry camps at Hanmer and Balmoral. The camps for farm workers subsidised under the No.4A Scheme also appear to have been generally quiet, although farmwork was not popular.[197] Landowners tended to expect hard labour over long hours for low wages.

The problems of low pay, hard conditions and isolation were related. The attractions of the city over isolated country living had tended to increase since the turn of the century. Average housing conditions had also risen sharply, especially in town. It was now far more of a sacrifice for city men to be confined, virtually under compulsion, in make-shift camps far from their homes and urban life. They expected good wages to compensate them for this sacrifice. Furthermore, many of the city men were unused to coping with the boredom of camp life where distractions such as books, newspapers and gramophone records were difficult and expensive to obtain. Following a number of visits to the camps,[198] Sullivan helped to organise the provision of

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196. Press, 19 September, 1931. There was, however, some minor trouble at Hanmer in 1934. Sun, 6, 18 June, 1934.

197. Star, 4 July, 1932; Sun, 22 February, 1934. It would be easy to exaggerate the importance of the local camps. Most were supervised by the PWD and its relief camps never contained more than three or four hundred men in the whole of Canterbury. The Waimakariri River Trust employed over a thousand men at its camps but only limited numbers "lived in" with the city so close.

198. Sullivan was seldom able to afford the time to visit the often isolated camps in person. Therefore he despatched little detachments of city councillors from both parties and council officials to investigate camp conditions and morale. Press, 30 September, 1931; Star, 22 August, 1932; 2 February, 1934.

these materials to the men.[199] Radio sets were sought with particular eagerness.

Another feature of the depression, casual employment, was encouraged by part-time relief work and possibly by short-time working. Attempts to keep a close check on relief workers' "other earnings" proved exceedingly difficult to administer without a large inspectorate and the Unemployment Board had enough trouble in collecting its levies and tax. It would also have entailed complicated arrangements with local bodies to reduce allocations of different men by different amounts. The board therefore tended to rely on the honesty of relief workers,[200] information received and the fact that the number of days spent on relief prevented the unemployed from taking full-time jobs and still drawing their "dole".

Many of them turned to canvassing. It had not been unusual for women and children to sell surplus home produce and some purchased goods door-to-door,[201] but now there was an influx of men into this form of employment. During June, 1931, one householder claimed that he had been visited by twenty-three hawkers in three days.[202] Items hawked included meat, fruit and vegetables, bootlaces, stationery, fancy goods and a liquor "absolutely guaranteed to make

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199. Press, 16 October, 1931. The Star also collected large quantities of old books and magazines for the camps. Star, 9 July, 1932.

200. There were strong complaints at the vast amount of detail that relief workers were expected to provide. Star, 24 April, 1935. For summary of questions on UB 32 see Press, 17 March, 1933.

201. Information supplied to the author by the late Mrs. Peggy Jennings of Woolston, who had canvassed regularly with her mother as a young girl during this period. Also information from Mrs. R.E. Righton, who sold surplus produce from her parents' farm in Bromley door-to-door.

202. Sun, 9 June, 1931.

coal burn more slowly". The number of licenses issued by the city council for this form of selling increased from 160 in 1930 to 356 in 1931, and with a fee of three shillings a month it seems likely that very many sellers were unlicensed.[203] Within a year most licences had lapsed, and the enthusiasm of canvassers and the tolerance of householders had tended to wane.[204] It seems likely that the shift to sustenance pay after 1933 increased the resort to casual work, including canvassing, by eliminating the need to set aside a number of days each week for relief work. Certainly Christchurch shopkeepers were strongly complaining of unlicensed competition from hawkers in 1936.[205]

During that year the Unemployment Board carried out a survey in one major centre which revealed that over half the men on its payroll had supplementary earnings.[206] This was almost certainly an underestimate, given the understandable caution of which most of the unemployed in providing such information to officialdom. In 1936 Terence McCombs, the new Labour M.P. for Lyttelton, claimed that at least one in six of the forms required by the board were falsely made out.[207] Gardening and repair jobs were probably the commonest form of casual labour performed. On occasions odd-jobbing could extend to breaking the law by carrying out

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203. Sun, 24 August, 1931.

204. Sun, 22 August, 1931.

205. The city is crowded with wood and fruit hawkers, bottle dealers, and boot lace and lead pencil artists who are on the dole and do not think it worth while to mention this at the Labour Office. Star-Sun, 12 August, 1936.

206. "...a cross-section taken in one of the main Employment Bureaux recently disclosed the fact that approximately 50 per cent of the registered unemployed supplemented their relief earnings by casual earnings". AJHR, 1935, H35, p.2.

207. Star-Sun, 26 June, 1936.

plumbing or electrical work without a licence.[208] Other illegal attempts to fill empty pockets and empty hours included bookmaking and bootlegging.[209] Taxidriving was a notorious means of supplementing relief pay. In 1936 an inquiry into the taxi and carrying business was told in Christchurch how the share-driving system of Gold Band Taxis, operated by C.S. Trillo, had first driven out most driving for wages.[210] Then the number of taxis working for the company was doubled, then trebled, and the drivers found it impossible to make wages, despite long hours and ruses such as driving their cabs backwards to reduce the mileage on the meter. One former employee stated that

> Many Gold Band men had to go on relief. They would drive again at the weekends, from twelve o'clock on Saturday nights continuously until they were relieved on Monday mornings. A number were receiving sustenance and driving right through the week. They were sleeping a lot in the cars. They had to do it."[211]

It was further claimed that in October, 1935, forty of the drivers had been officially relief workers.

The importance of relief work and associated casual employment should not be exaggerated, however. The greatest number of relief workers employed on the No. 5 Scheme in and around the urban area was less than four thousand.[212] Even allowing for the few hundred single men sent "into the country" to full-time work, those on relief work did not constitute more than around fifteen per cent of the city's

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208. Sun, 1 February, 1933.

209. Star, 6 November, 1934; Times, 15 November, 1932.

210. Star-Sun, 29 September, 1936.

211. Star-Sun, 30 September, 1936.

212. Calculated from figures given in Press, 21 February, 21 April, 5 August, 1933; 30 April, 1935; Times, 15 April, 1933.

male workforce at any one time. Many more men would have gone through a short spell of relief work at some time, but it was far from being the experience of the majority of Christchurch men during this period.

For most the impact of the depression on earnings was represented by a reduction in working hours (loss of overtime and short-time working), the official cuts in wage and salary rates, and falling profits. On the other hand, these must be set against a rapid fall in the cost of living. In particular, the dark cloud of falling prices for primary producers had a silver lining for urban consumers. In Christchurch the official index of prices for the three food groups (fruit and vegetables, groceries and meat) had fallen 15% by 1931, compared with the average between 1926 and 1930.[213] In 1932 the fall had increased to 23% and in 1933 it was 27%. Even in 1935 the average level was 19% below that for 1926-30. The index of house-rents was slower to fall.[214] In 1932 it was 16% down on 1926-30 in Christchurch. A year later the reduction stood at 25% and it was still over twenty per cent in 1935. Interest rates on mortgages had been cut by the latter amount in 1932.

The numbers of employees who had their earnings reduced by less than twenty per cent during the depression were considerable. They included public servants, local body employees and the "average" factory worker. Public servant wages and salaries were cut by ten per cent in June, 1931,

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213. CSO, Prices, Wages, etc. 1936, p.1.

214. Ibid., loc.cit.

and again by a maximum of ten per cent during the following year. This represented a maximum cut of nineteen per cent in all, but the second reduction was graduated and therefore most cuts fell into the fifteen to seventeen per cent range.[215] These reductions were partially restored at the beginning of 1935. Most local body employees suffered only a ten per cent cut in their pay rates, with only the higher-paid salaried officials of the Christchurch City Council facing any reduction at all.[216] The annual average earnings of male factory workers in Canterbury dropped by seventeen per cent between their apex in 1930-31 and their nadir in 1933-34.[217] The fall in the average female factory earnings over the same period was thirteen per cent but the decline continued to fifteen per cent in 1935-36. The calculation of average earnings, based on the division of total earnings by total employees, may slightly underestimate the actual decline in the pay of individual employees in 1933-34 because it is probable that higher paid staff with particular skills were less likely to be made redundant. On the other hand, it tends to underestimate the rate of recovery in earnings as less skilled and younger employees were taken on. The incomes of workers in private shops and offices are difficult to trace. Nevertheless, one Christchurch merchant returned his thirty-five employees wages to pre-cut levels in October, 1933[218]

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215. NZYB, 1934, p.650.

216. In June, 1931, their salaries were reduced on a graduated scale from 15% on £1000 to 8% on £350. In August, 1931, ten per cent was made the maximum, but in most cases the cut was much less. Sullivan suggested the average was around 7.5%. Christchurch City Council, Outward Correspondence, 28 June, 1932; 8 February, 1933.

217. Calculated from figures in CSO, Factory Production, 1926-31; Factory and Building Production, 1932-36, "Summary by Provincial Districts".

218. Sun, 3 October, 1933.

and there were repeated reports of other employers restoring between 2½% and 7½% of the ten per cent by the end of 1934.[219] Almost all groups of workers whose earnings can be estimated from published figures appear to have had an increase in their real incomes by the middle of 1933. This increase was eroded somewhat by the rise in the cost of living to 1935, but some gains still remained in real income for persons in employment over their situation during the more prosperous late 'twenties.

A reduction in average hours worked was another improvement in labour conditions which the combined influences of technological change and economic depression helped to bring about. In addressing the problem of how to reduce very high and persistent levels of unemployment the authorities handed on part of the increased production from new technology in the shape of shorter working hours. The rebellious A.E. Armstrong was not the only prominent citizen of Christchurch pushing for this change. In 1935 Sidney George Holland, later to be Prime Minister but then the immediate past-president of the Canterbury Employers' Association, joined other progressive businessmen in

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219. The Canterbury Education Board restored the second cut in August, 1933. Sun, 2 November, 1933. In April, 1934, a merchandising firm employing a hundred workers became the fourth large firm to restore half the ten per cent cut. Sun, 16 May, 1934. At the beginning of the 1934-35 killing season the freezing companies had almost entirely restored the rate per hundred stock killed. Sun, 17 October, 1934. Another national hardware merchant just beat the Labour-controlled Christchurch Tramway Board to partial restoration. Sun, 15 November, 21 December, 1934.

advocating a forty-hour week without loss of pay.[220] As early as 1933 the Unemployment Board limited workers employed on building work under the No. 10 Scheme to forty hours work per week. This became standard on the full-time relief works initiated by local bodies at award rates during 1934 and 1935.[221] Even in the private sector there was a sudden downward movement of four per cent in full-time weekly hours during 1935-36.[222] Between 1914 and 1926 average hours dropped by five per cent and then scarcely moved for the next nine years.[223] Clearly there was a strong downward pressure on working hours to back the implementation of a forty-hour week in most industries by the new Labour Government. Average hours

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220. Together they constituted an Industries Development Sub-committee of the Canterbury Manufacturers' Association (CMA). Sun, 14 March, 1935. Holland's importance and capability have tended to be underestimated, or at least neglected, by historians. Not only did he lead the way on the question of reduced hours, he welcomed the partial restoration of the cut in civil service salaries (Times, 25 August, 1934), was a strong advocate of tariffs to develop New Zealand's domestic market (Press, 26 September, 1934) and took a leading part in public protests against the devaluation of 1933 (Sun, 2 February, 1933). On the latter occasion his retirement from the presidency of the Canterbury Employers' Association may well have been foreshadowed by his suggestion that individual farmers should have been subjected to a "means test" rather than automatically assisted through the exchange rate. Holland's proposal for "debt-free money" has received some notice (Sutch, op.cit., p.174), and is an example of the same determination to find ways to get the economy expanding again.

221. Labour Department Files, 1/2/872. The CMA's report is in the file and served as a basis for cabinet approval of a conference on the subject, to be held after the general election.

222. CSO, Prices, Wages, etc, 1936, p.15.

223. Ibid., 1933, p.16.

worked dropped by another eight per cent when this legislation was applied in the 1936-36 year.[224]

The employment of women was an area particularly affected by new technology in the 'twenties and 'thirties. Their opportunities for paid employment expanded despite the depression, and to a limited extent because of it. Nationally the number of women "in gainful employment" increased by 20.9%, compared with an increase of only 14.8% for then.[225]

Manufacturing industry saw a particularly substantial growth in its female workforce. Between 1926 and 1936 the average number of women wage-earners in Canterbury factories during the year increased by 57%, as against a rise of about eight per cent in the number of their male counterparts.[226] As a result, the female proportion of wage-earning factory staff in the province increased from 22% to 30%.

There was a particularly large growth in the employment of women in industries which already had well-estalished female workforces. Most striking was the increase in the proportion of female employees in the Christchurch footwear

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224. Ibid., 1939, p.17. The Labour Party in Christchurch had made the provision of a forty-hour week without loss of pay to council employees a central plank of their programme for the 1935 Municipal election. NCLRC, Minutes, 14 March, 1935. Unfortunately this merely compounded the impression that the party represented the interests of council workers rather than ratepayers.

225. Census, 1926, Vol.9, p.44-50; 1936, Vol.10, p.38-51, 52-59.

226. CSO, Factory..., 1926-36, "Employment - Male Wage-earners by Months" and "Female Wage-earners by Months".

industry, from 23% in 1926 to 33% in 1936.[227] The local tailoring industry also employed a substantially higher percentage of women at the end of this time, as did the manufacturers of biscuits and confectionery.[228]

However, there was also a considerable movement of female wage-earners into forms of manufacturing traditionally dominated by men. This was not simply a wage-cutting measure. In a number of cases the employment of female workers was agreed to by the Arbitration Court while the industries concerned were still increasing production and employment under the stimulus of the United Government's expansionary policies and an international economic recovery was widely envisaged rather than any collapse. During 1930, for example, the dominion's engineering employers managed to get female workers accepted into awards covering the lighter areas of their work. These included "light drilling, cutting and screwing, light milling, ore grinding, light lathe work, assembling, soldering, painting, backing and core-making".[229] The Iron and Brass Moulders' Federation of Workers had declared the proposal "a dastardly attack on the standard of culture of the womanhood of this dominion". It maintained that "the women of New Zealand are on a higher plane of culture than in countries where womanhood is degraded to do such work" - scrubbing floors and handling dirty clothes were clearly more uplifting. Under the changed award many young

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227. Ibid., "Boot and Shoe Manufacturing".

228. Ibid., "Biscuit, Confectionery, and Sugar-boiling Works".

229. Star, 23 May, 1930.

women subsequently found employment in the light engineering enterprises fostered by electrical technology. For example, "dozens of girls" were employed by the New Zealand Dry Cell and Battery Co., established in Christchurch in 1933.[230] Women had also been accepted into the motor upholstery trade in 1930.[231] At the end of 1934 they were introduced into the award covering motor assembly, following the introduction of c.k.d. quotas.[232]

Other male-dominated industries also experienced an influx of female workers during the late 'twenties and early 'thirties. In 1930 the Christchurch Printers' Union was calling for the cessation of classes in their trade at the Technical Institute, linking them to an increase in the number of women employed.[233] Between 1926 and 1930 the number of female wage-earners in Canterbury printing works had increased by ten per cent, compared with an increase of two per cent in the number of such male employees.[234] In the Canterbury furniture-making industry the proportion of female wage-earners increased from eight to twelve per cent between 1926 and 1929.[235] Even the male bastion of the freezing-works experienced an influx of female workers into their ancillary operations such as bag-making, packing, tinning and preserving. In 1934 H.C. Revell, the Secretary of the Canterbury Freezing Workers Union noted that provision

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230. Star, 17 February, 1934.

231. Sun, 16 August, 1930.

232. Sun, 7 November, 1934.

233. Sun, 8 November, 1930.

234. CSO, Factory..., 1926-30, "Printing Establishments".

235. Ibid., "Furniture and Cabinet Making".

for such employment had existed for some time. However,

> Canterbury employers had not taken advantage of the right to employ girls and women in the preserving departments until four years ago, when the New Zealand Refrigerating Company at Islington dismissed some male workers and substituted females. The Canterbury Frozen Meat Company at Belfast the following year did the same.[236]

Revell considered "the displacement of male labour by female labour...a serious aspect". He was commenting on an outcry against the employment of women in freezing-works, led in parliament by Bob Semple and Elizabeth McCombs.[237] Herbert H. Kyle, the very conservative Reform M.P. for Riccarton, agreed that such employment was "a scandal".

However, the most striking increase in female employment in terms of absolute numbers of workers occurred in the white-collar occupations, especially in shops and private offices. The national growth in female commercial employment (28.4%) was not as large as that in comparable male employment (47.9%).[238] Nevertheless, it was well above the percentage increase in the total female workforce. Most of the growth took place in the lower paid occupation of shop-assistant rather than the better paid and more prestigious occupation of saleswoman. But the number of female managers increased significantly.

On the other hand, the national increase in numbers of female office staff (23.2%) compared favourably with the rise of 16.7% in their male colleagues. Again most of the growth took place in the lower-paid office occupations such

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236. Sun, 12 October, 1934.

237. Sun, 17 October, 1934.

238. Unless otherwise indicated, these and following figures are calculated from Census, 1926; 1936, loc.cit.

as typist, cashier and office machinist. Yet there was substantial expansion in usually more distinguished and more lucrative vocations such as that of "secretary" - private, company, organisational and "not otherwise described". There was also a greater percentage of women amongst those giving book-keeper, or customs, shipping or law clerk as their occupation. Unfortunately too few clerical jobs are enumerated for the Christchurch Urban Area in both 1926 and 1936 censuses to make a comparison between local trends in male and female office employment. Nevertheless, examination of the annual factory returns from twenty-two Canterbury industries reveals that the female proportion of their total office staff increased from 27.8% to 33.8% between 1926 and 1932.[239]

Other white-collar occupations showed a similar trend. The national proportion of women employees in journalism rose from eight per cent in 1926 to eleven per cent in 1936, despite an increase of over a third in the number of male employees. This was evident to a minor degree in the returns from Canterbury "Printing Works", which included newspapers.[240] The number of female literary staff grew from ten to eighteen between 1927 and 1931 while the number of males actually dropped from 133 to 127. Similarly, women increased their dominance in the expanding vocation of library work. In 1936 they formed 80% of the total employees in that field, compared with 73% in 1926. The numbers of persons employed had risen from 204 to 376 or 84%.

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239. CSO, Factory..., 1926-32, individual industries.

240. Ibid.

Two major areas of white-collar work where female employment tended to decrease were teaching and the public service. Between 1926 and 1936 the national proportion of teachers who were women declined from 64.4% to 62.1%, although their total numbers remained roughly static. The number of women in the public service occupations decreased by twelve per cent, compared with an eleven per cent increase in the number of men employed. In both cases the constriction of recruitment meant that women employees leaving to marry were not replaced. There was also some discrimination against married women in the teaching service.[241]

Conversely, the numerically small but socially very important representation of women in the professions showed a significant increase. Their share of the total of medical practitioners rose from 6.5% to 7.6% between 1926 and 1936. They also held their share of the rapidly growing number of university posts, although they had still not gained a professional chair in 1936. The first academic appointment of a woman at Canterbury University College occurred in 1916.[242] Up to 1926 there had only been two

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241. As early as January, 1930, the Canterbury Education Board was protesting at having to continue employing married women whose husbands could support them. Sun, 17 January, 1930. It was eventually decided to employ no more married women teachers from 17 March, 1933. Sun, 21 April, 1933; 20 September, 1935. The feeling against married women holding jobs when their husbands had steady employment was very strong, particularly amongst working people. Sun, 17, 25, 27 July, 26 August, 27 September, 1929; 7 February, 1933; 30 August, 1934; 26 March 1935. In 1929 the Otago Labour council condemned the practice. Sun, 7 December, 1929. Sullivan wrote of "the absorption in commerce of thousands of girl and women workers, who, because they are competent and their labour cheap, have pushed out their fathers, brothers, husbands and sweethearts into the ranks of the workless". Times, 22 May, 1930.

242. W. Gardner, E.Beardsley and T.Carter, A History of the University of Canterbury, 1873-1973, Christchurch, 1973, p.457-68.

such appointments, but there were five more during the next decade.

The drive by employers to reduce costs in difficult economic times was certainly one motive behind the growth in female employment. Where women were admitted to awards they were usually given a lower wage-rate, and in all occupations where there were significant numbers of men and women the latter had substantially lower incomes.

However, the desire by employers to save money was not the only reason for the influx of women into the workforce. Electrical machinery was usually lighter to operate than its predecessors and its attendants did not normally require a long period of apprenticeship, as they had when the same work had been performed manually. Similarly, in the case of secretarial work, applicants generally acquired their skills outside their place of employment, in their own time and at their own expense at Technical Institute night school or a private commercial college such as Digby's. Thus an employer lost comparatively little of his investment when a female employee left to get married, and she could be replaced relatively easily. The increase in female factory employment was further assisted by the fact that the greatest expansion was taking place in retailing, officework and light industries such as clothing manufacture, food processing and assembling. Work in these areas offended least against the prevailing view of women as inherently weak. Finally there was a strong demand for jobs from increasing numbers of young women seeking employment between school and marriage. With fewer brothers and sisters to look after, less family

self-sufficiency and less domestic industry, keeping girls at home had become an expensive anachronism in a growing number of households. To this extent the Sun was right when it claimed in 1934 that "times have greatly changed since it was thought fitting by men that their wives and daughters should sit by the fire and stagnate mentally in what was little else than domestic imprisonment".[243] As more young women earned a little money of their own, producers and advertisers increasingly directed their activities towards the exploitation of the new market. This closed the circle by enhancing the appeal of paid employment for girls.

There is comparatively little evidence that the big shift in employment towards women between 1926 and 1936 represented the efforts of a large number of employers to take advantage of depression conditions to sack men in order to replace them with lower-paid and more docile women. In some Canterbury industries, such as printing and grain-milling, the proportion of male to female wage-earners actually increased between 1930 and 1932.[244] In none did the movement to a higher percentage of women wage-earners accelerate between those years. Women workers were often the last on, the least skilled and those less likely to have to support a family. It was during the recovery period that the spectacular growth in female factory employment resumed in Canterbury and it continued long after economic and industrial conditions had changed.

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243. Sun, 1 May, 1934.

244. CSO, Factory..., 1926, 1932.

The percentage increase in such employment was still double that for male wage-earners in Canterbury factories between 1936 and 1937.[245] This was roughly the same differential as between 1926 and 1929. There was almost certainly some "sweating" on some jobs especially in Auckland. However, there appears to have been little in Christchurch's clothing industry, a major and expanding employer of women. J. Roberts, a leading local trade unionist and Secretary of the New Zealand Clothing Trades Federation put this down to "the local officers of the Labour Department, particularly the chief and the lady inspector, for their zeal in dealing with anything suggesting 'sweating'...".[246]

Paid domestic work was an area into which many girls were still forced by economic necessity and in which poor wages and conditions prevailed. The number of women in female domestic occupations increased by twenty-two per cent between 1926 and 1936. This was somewhat more than the overall increase in female employment but was significantly less than the twenty-seven per cent growth in domestic employment between 1921 and 1926. Furthermore, there was a clear decline in the number of housemaids, pantrymaids, lady helps, and nursemaids, typically full-time workers living within the households that employed them. On the other hand there was a big increase in the number of general female domestic servants and housekeepers, many of whom would have lived in their own homes. Electric

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245. Ibid, "Summary by Provincial Districts".

246. Star, 19 October, 1933. He was commenting on an Auckland Anglican Synod resolution on "sweating", and touched on the situation in that city.

irons, gas and electric stoves, water heaters, and, above all, vacuum cleaners were rapidly reducing the need for full-time domestic staff. The "daily" became increasingly prevalent in wealthy homes which once would have had one or two servants tucked away in little rooms at the back of the house. In 1929 a group of Christchurch professional and society women formed a Home Service Association with the aim of bringing together those wishing to employ part-time domestic labour and those prepared to provide it.[247] The Association offered

> someone to wash up, to look after your children, to darn or mend, to do fine smocking, to read to an invalid, to undertake odd sewing, to look after your home in the afternoon or the evening, to arrange suppers for bridge parties, to set tables for afternoon teas, to iron, to shop...[248]

With such assistance wealthy wives could continue to live in decorative idleness without the cost of full-time servants.

The development of the home appliances which reduced the need for such servants was timely, as the growth of alternative employment for young women was hardening their resistance to service. Live-in domestic jobs had been unpopular with working people not born into servant families even in nineteenth century rural England.[249] Such work meant being constantly on call, taking low wages for long hours of labour, enjoying little private life, conforming to their employers' often strict models

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247. Sun, 26 March, 1929.

248. Sun, 18 May, 1929.

249. R. Samuel, "Quarry Roughs", in R. Samuel (Ed.), Village Life and Labour, London, 1975, p.157.

of behaviour, enduring the latter's varying moods from the base of the pecking order and suffering isolation from family and friends. This isolation was particularly significant in New Zealand, where a high proportion of the people able to afford servants lived on farms.

Despite widespread unemployment amongst women, private labour bureaux in Christchurch repeatedly reported difficulty in filling applications for female domestics throughout the depression years.[250] For example, the Sun reported in March, 1934, that

> two weeks ago a dental firm in Christchurch advertised for an assistant and received well over 150 applications. Of the number only one girl was working. Meanwhile labour exchanges and homes in town and country are crying out for help. Something is wrong somewhere.[251]

Miss M. Trent, a member of the Women's Unemployment Committee (WUC) and a stalwart of the anti-Labour Citizens' Association, replied that "it all boils down to the fact that unless housework is put on a union basis and made a profession, with definite hours, things will never get better". Two months later labour bureaux told the Sun that there was a big demand for "daily work" in shops, tearooms and factories because it gave young women freedom at the weekends, but "it was most difficult to persuade girls to accept country appointments".[252]

Nevertheless, the main thrust of the work of the local WUC was towards training girls for paid domestic service.

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250. Sun, 11 May, 1931; 17 October, 1932; 21 January, 6 October, 1933; 3 May, 1934; 4, 18 May, 1935.

251. Sun, 2 March, 1934.

252. Sun, 27 April, 1934.

One trade unionist on the committee described this emphasis as amounting to a "fetish"[253] and alleged that the intention of government policy under Coates seemed to be "to provide the farming community with cheap female domestic labour".[254] He talked of "domestic slavery". Certainly two non-Labour social workers mentioned cases where requests for domestic employees had been made on the assumption that no wages would be paid.[255] Apparently undeterred, Mrs. Coates opened a new domestic training centre in Christchurch, telling the assembled girls that they would be ever grateful for the opportunity they were being given.[256] The small allowance of 7/6, later 10/-, per week appears to have been the major attraction for the 150 or so young women who attended the centre.[257]

For young women as well as young men, the attractions of city life had increased greatly since the turn of the century. Moreover, alternative and much more attractive opportunities for employment had been increasing in town. Finally, the new system of regular relief work for married men helped to relieve the pressure on their daughters to

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253. Sun, 25 June, 1932.

254. J. Roberts was the trade unionist. Sun, 3 July, 1931. E.H. Howard MP had a rather different complaint. He maintained that the WUC was spending "money that unemployed men should get". Sun 1 December, 1933.

255. Sun, 23 April, 1931. Duties included milking five cows. Sun, 16 July, 1932. A. Fraer claimed "I have been asked, not once but many times, for girls to do housework and help in the home, but no wages are offered for such services".

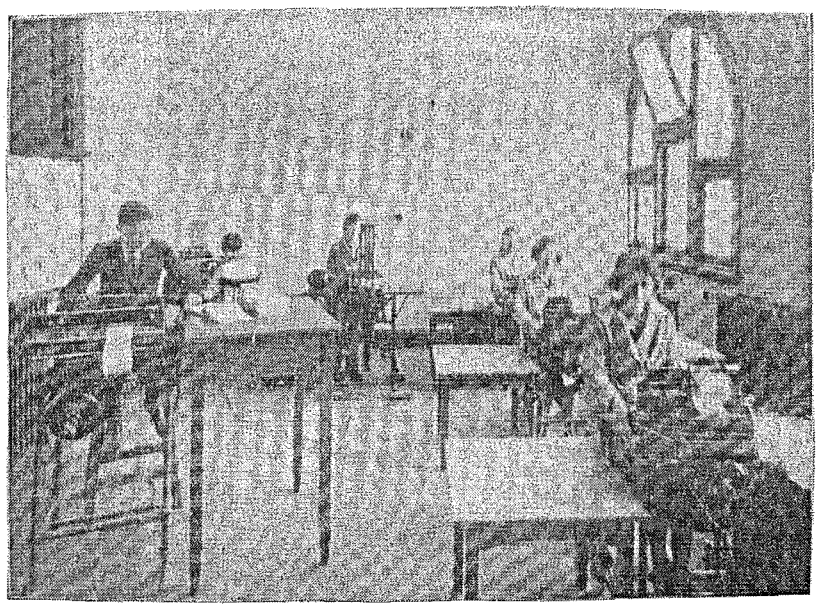
256. Sun, 6 October, 1932.

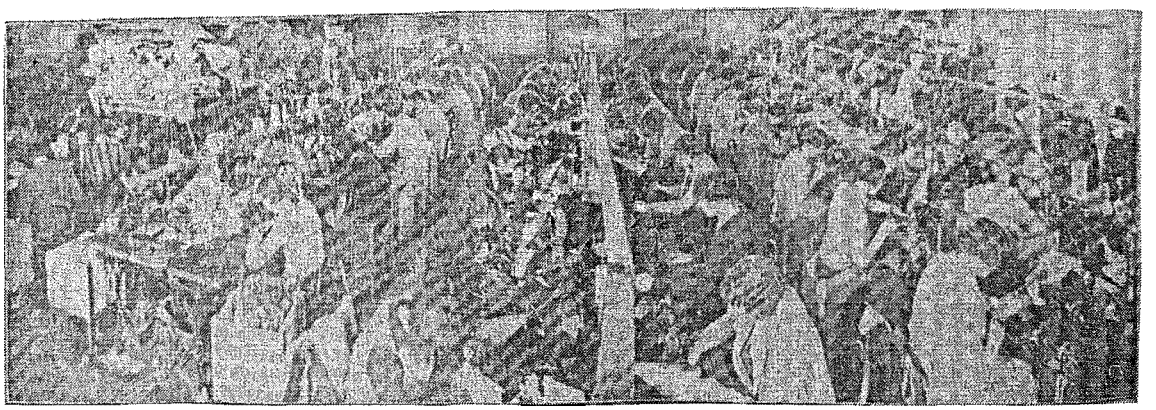
257. Press, 24 February, 3, 17 June, 17 July, 1933. Also information from a Mrs. Ellis, who spent some time at the centre.

13. New technology and new personnel in the office.
Note electricity cables snaking across the floor.
(MED, Annual Report and Statement of Accounts, 1930.)

14. One of the workrooms at Miller's, a Christchurch Company that expanded its workforce from six to 117 between 1930 and 1932. The vast majority of its employees were women. By May, 1934, it was employing 320 people. This family firm exploited the potential of new electrical machines to produce clothing cheaply for the mass market.
(Star, 12 May, 1934.)

15. Mrs. J.G. Coates opens the new domestic training centre in Christchurch in October, 1932.
(E. Ebbett, Victoria's Daughters, p.54.)





go into service in order to support the family.[258]

However, work for pay constituted only a small part of the labour ordinarily performed by women. Unpaid domestic work at home remained their greatest task - even for many of those taking outside paid employment. But for many housewives changes in technology were already doing much to reduce this traditional burden.

Electric lighting was by far the most common application of the new technology in Christchurch households in 1926 and one which required less cleaning and maintenance than illumination by gas, kerosene or candle. As a further incentive the MED provided loans to householders to make the expense of connection more manageable.[259] By 1926 well over three-quarters of households in the city and New Brighton were receiving an "electric light bill".[260] A number of new connections, in excess of disconnections and new building, were made during the early 'thirties, and by 1936 virtually every home in the Christchurch Urban Area was illuminated by electricity.[261]

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258. Another area of "paid employment" which may have grown during the depression was that of prostitution. Certainly there was talk of an increase in its incidence. Sun, 4 April, 1932. The local social worker for the Society for the Protection of Women and Children maintained that it was less prevalent than after the Great War. In early 1934 a policeman described Latimer Square as a "hotbed of thieves and loose women just recently". Star, 27 March, 1934. National figures for in-patient treatments for gonorrhoea are subject to the usual reservations such as low reporting due to cost. However, a large rise in the number of women treated in 1931 may indicate a greater resort to prostitution at a time when female unemployment was growing rapidly. CSO, Vital Statistics, 1925-39, "Diseases Treated in Public Hospitals".

259. MED, Annual Report and Statement of Accounts, 1927.

260. Ibid., and Census, 1926, Vol.XIII,p.20.

261. Census, 1936, Vol.XIII,p.11. Approximate totals of electric ranges and water heaters can be found in CSO, Local Authorities Handbook, 1927-36, and AJHR, 1927-36, D1.

A wide range of other labour-saving household electrical appliances were available by 1926. These included irons, vacuum cleaners, water-heaters, toasters, cookers, radiators, sewing and washing machines, kettles, and even refrigerators. Electricity was more versatile than its main competitor, gas, whose main home appliances were stoves, heaters, small water heaters and rather fearsome irons. Once a house was wired for power, a much more extensive list of appliances could be used. Furthermore, electric stoves, usually had an extra power point incorporated in them, enabling an electric jug or a toaster to be plugged in. Electricity also had other advantages in the home; electrical leads could be connected and disconnected more simply, were more flexible, and were less liable to leak than gas lines.

However, the installation of most electrical home appliances required a new link to the mains supply and heavy wiring through conduits to each heating point. The cost of such work deterred many householders and helped to make the electric light and the electric iron - which could be powered from a special "ironing point" - the only widespread electrical home appliances in Christchurch up to 1926.[262] Moreover, the stove tended to be the purchase on which the decision to electrify pivotted and gas ranges

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262. There were already 1,235 ironing points in 1922, MED, op.cit., 1922. The enthusiasm with which other household electrical appliances were taken up should not be underestimated, however. Electrolux reported that it had sold four thousand vacuum cleaners during its first nine months operating in New Zealand. Star, 30 January, 1926. It was only one of a number of companies selling in that field. Given an average wholesale price of seven or eight pounds, about eight thousand were imported in 1929 and rather more in 1935. CSO, Trade and Shipping, "Imports", 1929, 1935.

continued generally to be cheaper than their electrical counterparts. Consequently the majority of the new stoves installed in Christchurch during the building boom of the 'twenties were powered by gas. The number of gas stoves in Canterbury, most of them in Christchurch, more than doubled between 1923 and 1929.[263]

On the other hand, the rapidly falling price of domestic electricity (Table 4.7), its versatility, and the decrease in the cost of electrical appliances (Table 4.8), meant that the number of Christchurch homes with electric ranges was actually growing at a much faster rate than the number with gas cookers. Between 1929 and 1932 the two forms of energy attracted roughly the same number of new users, but thereafter electricity moved ahead. As the large-scale building of new homes resumed after the middle of 1933, it was the MED that captured the largest part of the market with an aggressive range sales campaign.[264]

TABLE 4.7: DOMESTIC ENERGY PRICES (1923 - 100)

	1923	1926	1929	1932	1935
Electricity	100	86	56	43	34
Gas	100	90	90	(83)	(83)
Coal	100	81	92	(88)	(85)

Sources: MED, Annual Report and Statement of Accounts, 1923-35; CSO, Factory and Building Statistics, 1932, 1935, (gas prices); Prices, Wages, etc., 1923-29 (gas and coal prices).

263. CSO, Factory..., 1923, 1929, "Gasworks".

264. MED, op.cit., 1934, 1935.

TABLE 4.8: PRICES OF SOME NEW ELECTRICAL APPLIANCES, 1923-35

	1923	1926	1929	1932	1935
Electric -					
iron		17/6	15/6	13/6	11/6
toaster		25/-	18/6		11/9
boiler		15/6	10/6		6/9
kettle		37/6	32/6		24/6
light	1/5	1/2½	1/-	1/2½	1/1

Sources: Star, various issues, cheapest advertised prices. CSO, Trade and Shipping, 1923-35 (light bulbs).

Its offers of no-interest hire-purchase and free installation were firmly based on the rising profitability of selling current as bulk charges fell and the volume flowing through existing facilities increased. Electrical supply authorities now had greater profits to distribute than their competitors.[265] In building their new homes, young married couples faced the capital cost of installing some sort of power and electricity had versatility and an image of modernity as well as a growing cost-competitiveness. In all, the proportion of dwellings in the Christchurch Urban Area with electric ranges rose from less than four per cent in 1927 to approximately twenty-seven per cent in 1936. (Fig.4.7)

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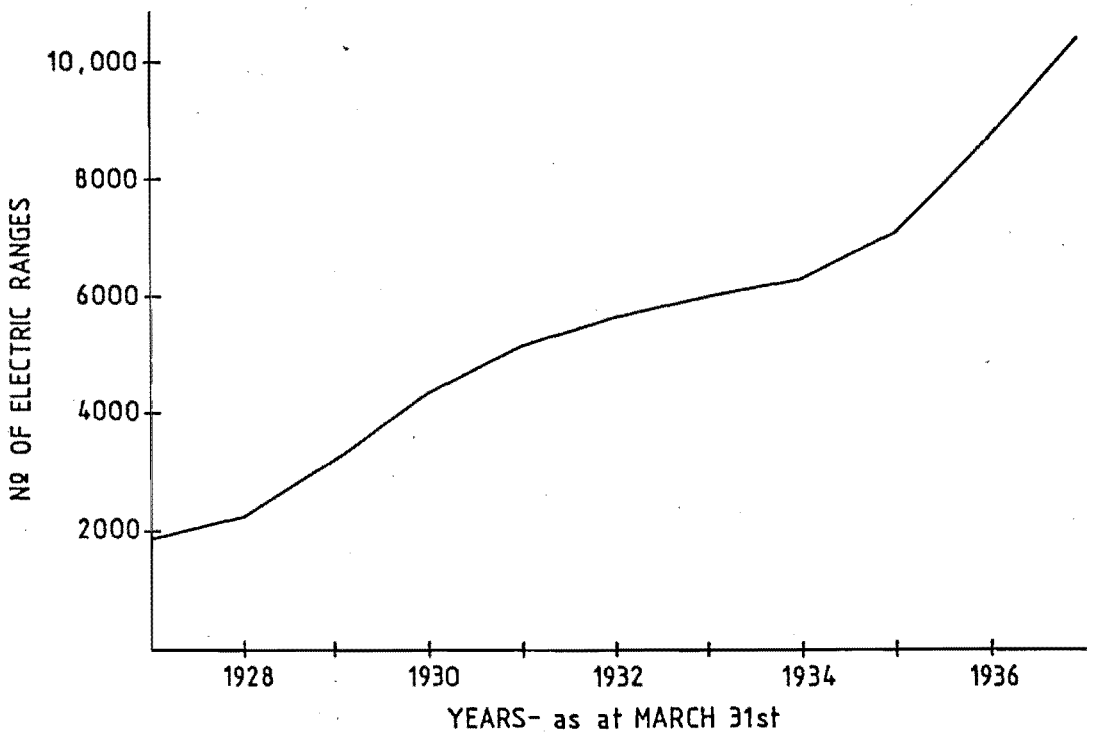
265. This can be seen in a comparison between the surpluses of revenue over expenditure recorded by gasworks and urban electricity authorities in 1935-36. The former recorded a 19% surplus while the electricity departments of city councils achieved a 29% surplus. Many gasworks were located in boroughs, where operations may have been more marginally economic than in cities. Yet borough electricity departments enjoyed a surplus of 32%. Figures calculated from CSO, Factory and Building Production, 1936, p.52, and AJHR, 1936, D1, p.97.

FIG. 4.7: ELECTRIC RANGES IN THE CHRISTCHURCH URBAN AREA



Source: AJHR, 1927-37, D1.

Electrical tenchology also reduced the work of the housewife in indirect ways. The further development of aluminium smelting industries overseas led to a further reduction in the cost of utensils made from it, and this no doubt boosted their sales. According to official figures, the cost of an aluminium saucepan in Christchurch fell from 8/7½ to 7/1½d. between 1925 and 1930.[266] Aluminium did not require as much scouring as iron, and was cheaper and less easily damaged than enamel. Stainless steel performed a similar function by providing relatively inexpensive cutlery which did not tarnish. As cheaper aluminium reduced the cost of extracting chromium, the price of stainless steel fell rapidly in the late 'twenties in relation to its plain steel competitors. In Christchurch the cost of a dozen stainless steel knives fell from 49/- to 33/6d between 1925 and 1930, while that of cheap quality knives dropped from 24/3d to 21/3d.[267] Other new products that were progressively lightening the load of household work included new chlorine bleaches, dry-cleaning fluids, and rayon - shrink-proof dress material as well as hosiery.

The appeal of these labour-saving devices and materials, and the ability to pay for them, was greatest amongst young women from economically comfortable backgrounds. An increasing number of them had tasted the freedom provided by taking paid employment outside the home. Given a capable

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266. CSO, Prices..., 1925, 1930.

267. Ibid.

breadwinner they could now reasonably expect that matrimony could be free of some of the year-round tyranny of cleaning the fire-grate, sweeping carpets, and scouring iron pots. Furthermore, they might avoid learning housekeeping the hard way: "No smoke, no smell, no coal to bring up, no ashes to carry out. No fallen cakes, no burnt meat, no delayed meals".[268] Now women of the skilled working and white-collar classes could aspire to the decorative and dependent upper-class ideal that had previously necessitated the employment of servants. Not only could they continue to enjoy themselves, they could be more entertaining to their husbands:

> Deep down in his peculiar heart, your husband... prefers your bobbed hair, and your ability and willingness to fox trot, to the sort of girl you would be if you spent all your time with a scrubbing brush and a tome on domestic science.[269]

Work had tended to become less arduous, particularly for the growing army of white-collar employees, while gramophones, radios and increased mobility by tram and car encouraged a more lively social life amongst young people generally. Shrewd and unscrupulous advertisers of home appliances played on the fear that domestic skills might no longer be enough to hold a man. They warned that a wife's failure to meet the new social demands could lead her husband to "seek home away from home".[270]

Such dangers were undoubtedly exaggerated. Nevertheless, something of a functional hiatus had been created for

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268. Star, 4 September, 1926.

269. Star, 3 July, 1926.

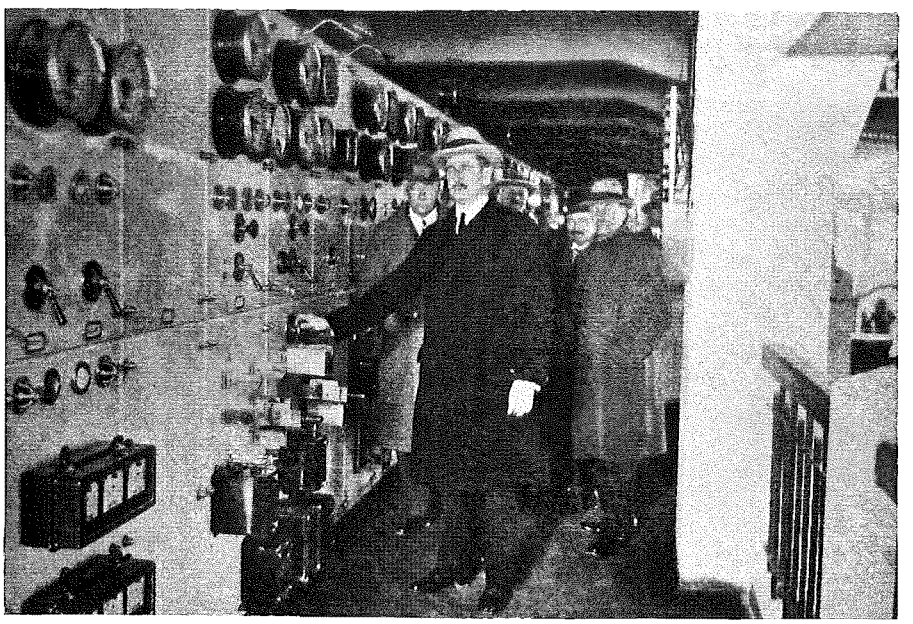
270. Ibid.

16. MED Showroom in 1926, showing much of the range of electrical household appliances available. Note the rather old-fashioned, jumbled and poorly lit nature of the display.
(MED, Annual Report and Statement of Accounts, 1926.)

17. MED Showroom in 1936. The department has clearly learnt something of the possibilities of its own technology in advertising - bright lights and shiny surfaces abound in an uncluttered display. Note the prominence of electric ranges in comparison with 1926.
(MED, Annual Report and Statement of Accounts, 1937.)

18. Gordon Coates (with his coat on) opening another extension to the Lake Coleridge power-station. Growing consumption necessitated an entire new scheme on the Waitaki within a few years. The use of cooking and heating appliances by domestic consumers accounted for the majority of the increased demand.
(Weekly Press and Referee, 19 August, 1926.)


MOFFATS
RANGES
TOAST



many housewives. There was less work to do at home because of the new labour-saving home appliances and smaller families, but as yet few married women had paid employment. The time and energy left over were often to be transferred into a fanatical devotion to cleanliness and the acquisition of new goods.

Nowhere were the two influences of technological change and economic depression so interwoven during the period 1926-36 as in the area of paid employment. They tended to hit the same groups of workers particularly hard and to benefit similar sections of the labour force. Furthermore, the adoption of new technology was comparatively little affected by the depression. The initial severe economic downturn of 1926 actually coincided with the introduction of much new labour-saving machinery. After a brief levelling out in the rate of innovation during the worst of the crisis between 1931 and 1933, new methods and machines quickly resumed their spread. Their impact on social organisation and social policy was immense. Looked at from one direction, that emphasised by contemporary observers, new technology displaced very large numbers of workers. Regarded from another, it eventually permitted not only a reduction in working hours for most employees but the reasonably dignified retirement of categories of worker whose participation in paid employment had been marginal and even painful. The relationship between these two developments was both fostered and masked by the massive unemployment of the early 'thirties and the change of government in 1935. These imposed a somewhat artificial division onto the whole movement. Up to the end of 1935 such developments tend to fall under the dismal headings of

"unemployment" and "unemployment relief". Thereafter they are both subsumed by a triumphant "further advance of the welfare state". Simultaneously technological change was altering the working lives of women, well over half of the city's adult population. It was providing many new avenues of employment, especially for single women, while reducing the drudgery of tasks in the home, still the main workplace for the majority of women. In the area of work the depression tended to play variations on the dominant themes laid down by changing technology.

CHAPTER FIVE

RECREATION

New technology altered forms of recreation between the wars to at least the same degree as it influenced patterns of work. In some cases it provided entirely new diversions; in others it extended exciting recreational opportunities. Overall, technological change had a more profound influence on leisure-time activities in the period 1926 to 1936 than the depression.

Motor transport was the form of new technology which had the most diverse impact on recreation. The motorcar and the motorcycle were used far more than leisure-time activity - the former had, for instance, become almost standard equipment for doctors by the time of the Great War.[1] Local and central government officials made growing use of motor transport to supervise outside works. At the beginning of 1926, for example, the Christchurch City Council Works Department office and administrative staff operated one car and a motorcycle, while in 1932 they had the use of three cars and two motorcycles.[2] Then again, it is difficult to make a precise distinction between leisure and work in the

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1. In Stethoscopes and Saddlebags, Auckland, 1965, p.93, Dr. E. Baker-McLagan noted that about 1910 "in Christchurch, when doctors were getting cars, I still had only a bicycle". One of her young patients doubted that she was "a proper dokker" because she lacked a "mokar-car".

2. Christchurch City Council, City Engineer's Report, 1926, p.62; 1932, p.38.

use of motor vehicles. Faster travel to the workplace may mean more disposable time, while the role of the shopper - strongly delegated to women - may be work, entertainment or a combination of both. Some wealthy citizens doubtless welcomed the chance to commute more flexibly to maintain their physical distance from other classes and to relax with acquaintances of their own choice on their way to work or shopping. Questions of parking places and times were leading to some local political agitation by 1926 while the Chief Traffic Inspector expressed concern at traffic congestion in 1930.[3] Comparison of the City Council's traffic "censuses" for 1929 and 1932 suggests that commuting, and therefore the problem continued to grow despite the depression.[4] Christchurch's first pedestrian "traffic lights" were installed at the end of 1930.[5]

However, cost deterred most Christchurch motorists from using their cars in preference to public commuter transport, and weekend, or holiday, recreation was probably the most widespread motive for purchasing a car or motorcycle. The weekend drive had become a popular institution by 1936 with heavy traffic on roads leading out of the city. A national survey of traffic densities on highways outside cities indicated that Saturday and Sunday were by far the busiest days in summer, but not in winter.[6] Between 1930 and 1936

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3. Christchurch City Council, Chief Traffic Inspector's Report, 1930.

4. See Appendix C.

5. Star, 1 March, 1932.

6. AJHR, 1936, H40, p.23. Judging by the information in the text, the labels on the figure (Fig.5) are reversed.

more fatal road accidents occurred on Sunday than on any weekday, despite hotels being officially closed.[7]

The move to more prolonged motoring holidays appears to have gained popularity rapidly in the late 'twenties. In 1926 the Star, normally well aware of new trends, was referring to motor camping as largely a North Island phenomenon: "Steps have been taken in the North Island to organise picnic grounds at selected points for the convenience of motorists, among whom the fashion of carrying a tent and provisions is growing".[8] Less than two years later it was strongly in evidence locally as well.[9] Impromptu and official motor camps proliferated as the motor car pushed the range of family holidays beyond the established tram-line resorts such as New Brighton and Sumner. Akaroa - which had never been accessible by rail - became a popular holiday centre while the coastline north of Christchurch became dotted with baches from Brooklands and Stewart's Gully up to Motunau. Inland waterholes also attracted motorised campers, as at Coe's Ford, Ashley Gorge, and Glentui. These invasions by the new mobile vulgus were bemoaned by those who had previously enjoyed such spots in wealthy isolation.[10] The adventurous rich now tended

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7. Ibid., p.51. Traffic densities were only slightly greater on Saturdays but the number of fatal accidents was over fifty per cent higher - indicating that alcohol was probably an important factor.

8. Star, 13 January, 1926.

9. Star, 12 October, 1927. Five months later the same newspaper praised the Labour City Council for prohibiting parking outside dancehalls. Star, 20 March, 1928.

10. See M. Holcroft, Carapace: The Motor Car in New Zealand, Dunedin 1979, p.46-47; and N. Marsh, Black Beech and Honey Dew, Boston, 1965, p.110.

to drive their cars further afield, to Mount Cook and Arthurs Pass. There they could follow the expensive sports of ski-ing in winter and mountaineering in summer.[11]

On a much larger scale, private motor transport made the sport of golf increasingly accessible to small businessmen, lesser professionals, and the salariat, as their greater mobility allowed them to travel further for a game. New links could now be established on cheaper land outside the city, providing many more alternatives to the exclusive Christchurch Golf Club.[12] A rash of new courses sprang up around the fringes of the urban area, at Avondale (1919), Harewood (1923), Russley (1928), Templeton (1931), Waimairi Beach (1932), Rawhiti (1932), Tai Tapu (1934) and Waitikiri (1937).[13] Four of these eight courses were opened during the worst years of the depression. Nationally the number of golf clubs grew from 96 to 109 between 1925 and 1926, with the number of players increasing from 9115 to 10171, almost 12% in one year.[14] The further growth in the sport, and particularly the large number of golf courses established, is reflected in an increase in the number of professional golfers in New Zealand from 30 in 1926 to 65 in 1936.[15] More widespread motor transport also contributed to an impressive expansion in the number of tennis clubs. Between

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11. Star, 30 June, 1930.

12. The Christchurch Golf Club itself acquired new links at Shirley in 1930.

13. P. Russell, Golf Courses of Canterbury, Christchurch, 1983.

14. NZYB, 1927, p.926.

15. Census, 1926, Vol.IX, p.49; 1936, Vol.X, p.51.

the 1923-24 and 1925-26 seasons the total increased from 302 to 366, with the number of registered players rising from just under twenty thousand to well over twenty-three thousand.[16] No doubt much of this growth took place in the country, where motor transport was particularly important for gathering players. However, the same factor would have operated to a lesser extent in the city, especially for inter-club competitions. Paradoxically, the new technology may have encouraged the use of horses in the sport of polo, with a substantial increase in the small club membership between 1924 and 1926, from 128 to 300.[17]

Sports directly based on motor vehicles also flourished. "Broadsiding" (speedway motor-cycle racing) made a popular, though very dangerous, addition to the professional sports of young working men, and Monica Park in Woolston became the nursery for future world champions such as Ronnie Moore. It seems likely that broadsiding had a particularly severe effect on other forms of summer professional sport, notably athletics. Certainly there was a sharp drop in the number of men affiliated to that sport between 1924-25 and 1925-26. The total declined from 6539 to around 4400.[18] Wealthier motor sportsmen could join the Canterbury Aero Club, or try power-boating on the Estuary.

More generally, speed, control of a powerful machine, and freedom to travel were intoxicating new sensations,

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16. NZYB, 1925, p.762; 1927, p.925.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.

especially for the young. Motor transport could permit a rapid escape from public, parental and even police oversight. Inner city residents objected to motorised boisterousness around some dance halls, and "the noise caused by the parking of cars until the small hours of the morning".[19] Some city fathers were shocked by the amount of "spotting" (illegal drinking) which took place in motor cars outside commercial dances. Some halls were closed as a result, and an 11.30 p.m. curfew was imposed on the remainder.[20] They were also forbidden to let patrons leave and return, possibly "spotted".[21] However, it was virtually impossible for the authorities to do anything about complaints of noisy drinking parties on vacant sections in distant suburbs. For example, "keg parties" were reported to occur regularly in Shortland Street in Aranui, on the fringes of the city. New Brighton in particular gained a reputation for moral laxity, not least because its numerous baches provided a comparatively isolated and unpoliced field in which motorised tearaways could sow their wild oats. In 1926 a lawyer sought to excuse the actions of two "respectable" young Ashburtonites in pestering a girl to accompany them in their motor car by remarking that "things are a little unorthodox down at New Brighton".[23] Later it became something of a risqué

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19. Star, 16 September, 1927.

20. Sun, 1 October, 1929.

21. Star, 31 January, 1929.

22. Sun, 13 September, 1930.

23. Star, 7 January, 1926. See also description of "frightful orgies" by individual who had rented a bach. Sun, 10 September, 1930.

joke to ask a woman "are you married or do you live in New Brighton?"[24] Such humour had its darker side in the discovery of the body of Emily Forward, who gassed herself in a bach at New Brighton after being abandoned, pregnant, by her taxi-driver boyfriend.[25]

Taxi-drivers appear to have attracted more than their share of sexual scandal. During 1928 the daughter of a prominent Heathcote County Councillor was found murdered at Burwood. Her lover, a taxi-driver, was charged with the crime but acquitted due to doubts about identification by witnesses in the vicinity of the crime.[26] During the early 'thirties, two young taxi-drivers, one of them a son of C.S. Trillo, the proprietor of the Gold Band Company, were harshly criticised by the local coroner for their part in an affair which concluded in the death of a young domestic following an abortion.[27] Trillos' share-driving system permitted many impecunious young men to acquire motor cars and the prestige that went with them. Even a cartoonist could picture Harry Holland as a lecherous taxi-driver for the dilapidated Red Taxi Company giving "the glad eye" to the civil service.[28]

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24. Information from R. Greenaway. The slightly seedy nature of New Brighton to a large extent resulted from its having been superseded as a resort for the better-off because of the advent of motor transport. "We're going to Pegasus Bay this year" was a jocular response from the hard-up to the motorists' boasting of holidays at Goose Bay or Akaroa. Information from the late Leo Greer of Bryndwr.

25. Star, 22 June, 1928.

26. Press, 16, 22, 26 November, 1927.

27. Sun, 16 April, 1931.

28. Times, 18 May, 1932.

The growing popularity of the private motor car was reflected in a 76% increase in registrations in Central Canterbury between 1926 and 1931 (Fig. 5.1). The number of registrations was affected by the depression, with a nine per cent decline between the end of 1930 and the end of 1933. However, this fall was surprisingly low considering that the real price of petrol tended to rise.[29] The level of registrations was restored in the subsequent two years. Moreover, it appears that most of the decline had taken place in rural areas of the district. The drop in the number of private driving licences issued by the city council was negligible, at less than one per cent, and occurred only between 1932 and 1933. Likewise, the number of registrations in the more heavily rural roading districts of South and North Canterbury show far greater declines than those in central Canterbury. Certainly the city council's traffic censuses[30] and the tramway's continuing fall in patronage suggest that the usage of motor cars for commuting at least was increasing at a considerably faster rate than that of car ownership in Central Canterbury as a whole.

Nevertheless it would be easy to exaggerate the social scope of such ownership. This does not appear to have extended much beyond the wealthy, the professions, businessmen, and the salariat. Statistics on the occupations of those re-registering their vehicles in July, 1933, show that these groups owned most of the motor cars (Table 5.1).

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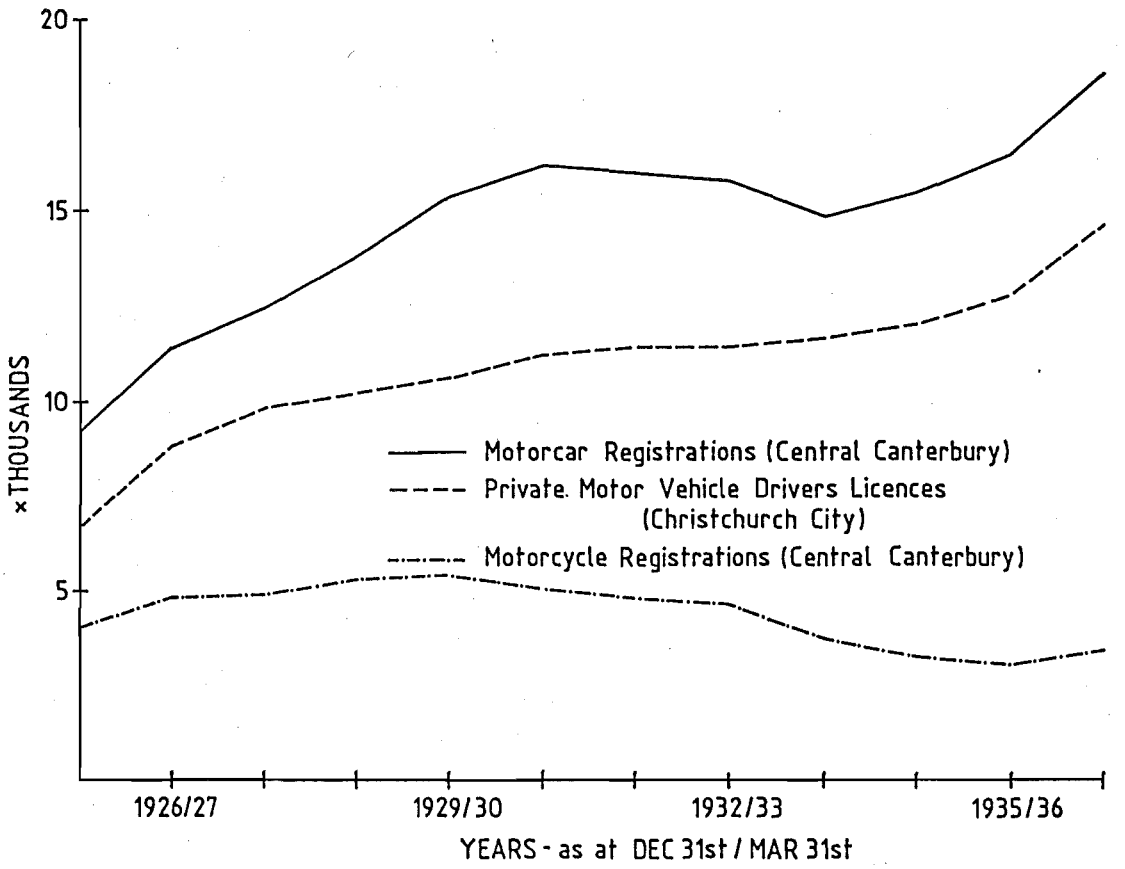
29. See Appendix A.

30. See Appendix C.

FIG. 5.1: MOTOR VEHICLE REGISTRATIONS AND DRIVING LICENCES, 1925-37*



Sources: AJHR, H-40, 1930, p.73; 1934, p.31; 1935, p.24; 1936, p.40; 1937, p.30. Christchurch City Council, Chief Traffic Inspector's Reports, 1926-37.

* The motor vehicle registrations are December and Central Canterbury statistics; the private driving licence totals are Christchurch City Council figures to March.

TABLE 5.1: CERTAIN OCCUPATIONS OF OWNERS OF MOTOR VEHICLES, 1933

	Occupation	per motor car			Occupation	per motor cycle
1.	Doctor	.98	(1.04)*	1.	Labourer	14.20
2.	Merchant	1.03		2.	Schoolteacher	19.00
3.	Business Manager	1.45		3.	Clerk	19.43
4.	Sheepfarmer	1.46		4.	Merchant	24.70
5.	Agent	1.61		5.	Farm Labourer	25.77
6.	Schoolteacher	1.92	(5.00)	6.	Agent	31.65
7.	Accountant	3.85		7.	Sheepfarmer	38.45
8.	Clerk	5.80		8.	Salesman	40.89
9.	Salesman	6.62	(8.44)	9.	Business Manager	64.63
10.	Labourer	10.10		10.	Doctor	91.58
11.	Farm Labourer	31.02		11.	Accountant	104.90

* Male and female

Source: AJHR, 1933, H40, p.34; CSO, Census, 1936, Vol.X, p.38-51.

The smallness of the fall in registrations and licences between 1932 and 1933 would therefore appear to be another reflection of the continued economic security of the capitalist and white-collar classes.

Figures for the registration of motor-cycles also seem to bear this out. The annual totals of Central Canterbury rose little in the late 'twenties and declined in every year between 1930 and 1935. Even during the winter of 1933 a substantial proportion of these machines were registered by wage-earners, particularly labourers. The fall in motor-cycle registrations therefore probably reflects the disproportionate economic difficulties of the unskilled and much of the independent working classes.

Unlike the use of motor cars, attendance at the cinema was a form of entertainment made possible by new technology which was within the financial reach of all

classes. Commercial motion pictures had arrived in Christchurch as early as 1906 and twenty years later there were seven cinemas operating in the central area (mostly in Cathedral Square) and a number in the suburbs. The "talkies" reached the city less than two years after their debut in the United States with the use of sound equipment at the Liberty on 10 June, 1929.[31] Surprisingly, given the overwhelming dominance of Hollywood, the film was Mother Knows Best, a British film featuring Harold Lloyd. Just over a year later the "silents" had virtually disappeared from central Christchurch and there were eight talkie cinemas in the city. These included the vast new Regent and Majestic theatres.

It is difficult to be precise about the impact of the depression on attendance at picture-theatres. There was fierce competition between large theatre chains - notably Fullers and J.C. Williamson's - and statistics of ticket-sales were not published. The report of a parliamentary commission of inquiry into the motion-picture industry in 1934 estimated that gross theatre takings had fallen almost 38% between 1930-31 and 1933-34.[32] However, this does not necessarily denote a commensurate decline in the number of patrons. According to evidence accepted by the committee, the prices charged for seats had been reduced substantially during the 1931-32 year. The lowest charge in city cinemas had been cut from a general 1/6 to 1/-, the minimum which the film wholesalers had imposed on

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31. Star, 17 January, 1931.

32. AJHR, 1934, H44A, p.12.

their customers in 1930. A number of suburban theatres had apparently defied this attempt to control the market by introducing "guest nights" where two persons were admitted for one shilling charge. In addition, the consumer had a considerable degree of economic choice as some seats, some sessions and some theatres were cheaper than others:

> It was stated that exhibitors had noted that individual patrons who previously patronized the 3s.3d. and 2s.9d. seats now patronized the 2s.2d. and 1s.6d. seats and the previous patrons of these latter sections of the theatre are now found in the minimum 1s. seats. It had also been found necessary to increase the number of seats available at the minimum price to meet the demand, and to reduce the maximum prices in most theatres.[33]

Theoretically, it is possible that virtually the whole of the reduction in gross receipts could have been explained in this way. Nevertheless, the general minimum charge in New Zealand was well above the lowest admission prices in the United States and Canada (the equivalent of 5d) and in Britain (approximately 4d.). This almost certainly restricted the patronage of motion pictures to a greater extent that in those countries. One study in Cardiff in the early 'thirties discovered that 52% of unemployed youths went to the cinema once per week and that half of those went twice.[34] Studies in Liverpool and Glasgow put the "once per week" category even higher, at eighty per cent. The price differential no doubt cut this rate significantly in New Zealand cities, but much the same appeal was there.

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33. Ibid., p.9.

34. C. Mowat, Britain between the Wars, London, 1955, p.485.

The effect of the depression is not strongly evident in the commercial decisions of the cinema industry - except for a short period in 1931 and 1932. Certainly the footage of film imported dropped from 14.5 million in 1929 to 11.8 million in 1932, a reduction of almost a fifth. However, the former year was during the full initial flush of the talkies, while the latter year's total was still substantially higher than the 11.2 million feet imported in 1926. The average length of film brought into the country annually during the five years between 1931 and 1935 was greater than in any consecutive five years during the 'twenties.[35] Furthermore, the progress of theatre-building seems to indicate a continuing popularity for films during the depression. The last of the Christchurch cinemas built or extensively renovated in the immediate post-talkie boom, the Plaza, was opened as late as March, 1931.[36] Less than three years later the construction of picture-houses was once again a major growth area for the local building industry.[37] In 1934 two cinemas, the Tivoli (Everybody's) and the Crystal Palace, were completely remodelled. During the following year three more were opened in the city, the Mayfair, Avon and the State. Such investment in celluloid and cement suggests that the showing of films was hit less hard and recovered more strongly and earlier than many other industries.

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35. CSO, Trade and Shipping, 1921-35.

36. Star, 21 March, 1931.

37. During 1933 there were 26 applications for cinema licences throughout New Zealand and in 1934 there were 65, eight of them within the Christchurch Urban Area. AJHR, 1934, H44A, p.12.

Nationally, the number of people employed in the motion-picture industry increased dramatically between 1926 and 1936. The number of men employed grew by 87% from 553 to 1032.[38] These were principally employed as projectionists or managers. The number of women in the industry rose at almost double this rate, from 235 to 580, or 147%. Most of them were employed as ushers or at the box-office.

The employment statistics also indicate the impact of the "talkies" on forms of live entertainment. The number of people employed in the live theatre fell from 513 to 360 or thirty per cent between 1926 and 1936. Circus and sideshow performers also dwindled in number, as did the number of musicians. The shrinkage in the latter category can be partly put down to the displacement of the cinema pianist or organ-player who had frequently enhanced, or ruined, the silent picture-show. Whereas many theatres such as Fuller's had combined vaudeville and motion pictures, they now converted almost wholly to films.[39] Many of those films featured music and singing, and they were increasingly in colour.[40] The decline in the live theatre was a significant change in patterns of entertainment, particularly in urban New Zealand, and it was the product of technological change, not the depression. The reduction in the number of touring stage companies and musical artists that occurred in the early 'thirties was not reversed in the later half of the decade.[41]

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38. Census, 1926, Vol.IX, p.24, 33; 1936, Vol.X, p.13, 22.

39. M. Hurst, Music and the Stage in New Zealand, Wellington, 1944, p.77, 93.

40. "Technicolour" first came to Christchurch with the film "Song of the West in 1932. Star, 29 December, 1932.

41. Hurst, op.cit., p.77, 84.

If the continued growth of the cinema was exceptional, that of the radio was spectacular. In the ten years following the establishment of the officially-funded Radio Broadcasting Company in 1926 the number of listening licences in Canterbury increased eightfold, to over thirty-four thousand (Fig. 5.2). This growth actually accelerated in the 1932-33 year, deep in the depression. The continued acceleration after 1933 could be partly put down to an increase in the rural audience following the installation of the Gebbies' Pass transmitter at the end of that year.[42] However, the national growth in the number of listening licences had been speeding up since 1930-31. In that year the total increased by 17%, compared with 20%, 25%, 26% and 29% in the succeeding four years to March, 1935.[43]

The licence figures must be regarded as something of an underestimate of the number of radios actually in use. The construction of a crystal set was extremely simple and could be achieved with materials costing only a shilling.[44] This was only a thirtieth of the annual charge for "operating a receiving-station" and it is likely that many avoided paying it. Furthermore, a large number of workplaces installed radios for the employees - thus providing many people with entertainment in the daytime that they could not afford at home. It is possible that a majority of Christchurch households possessed a radio in 1936 as the number of radio licences in the Canterbury provincial district then totalled more than half the number

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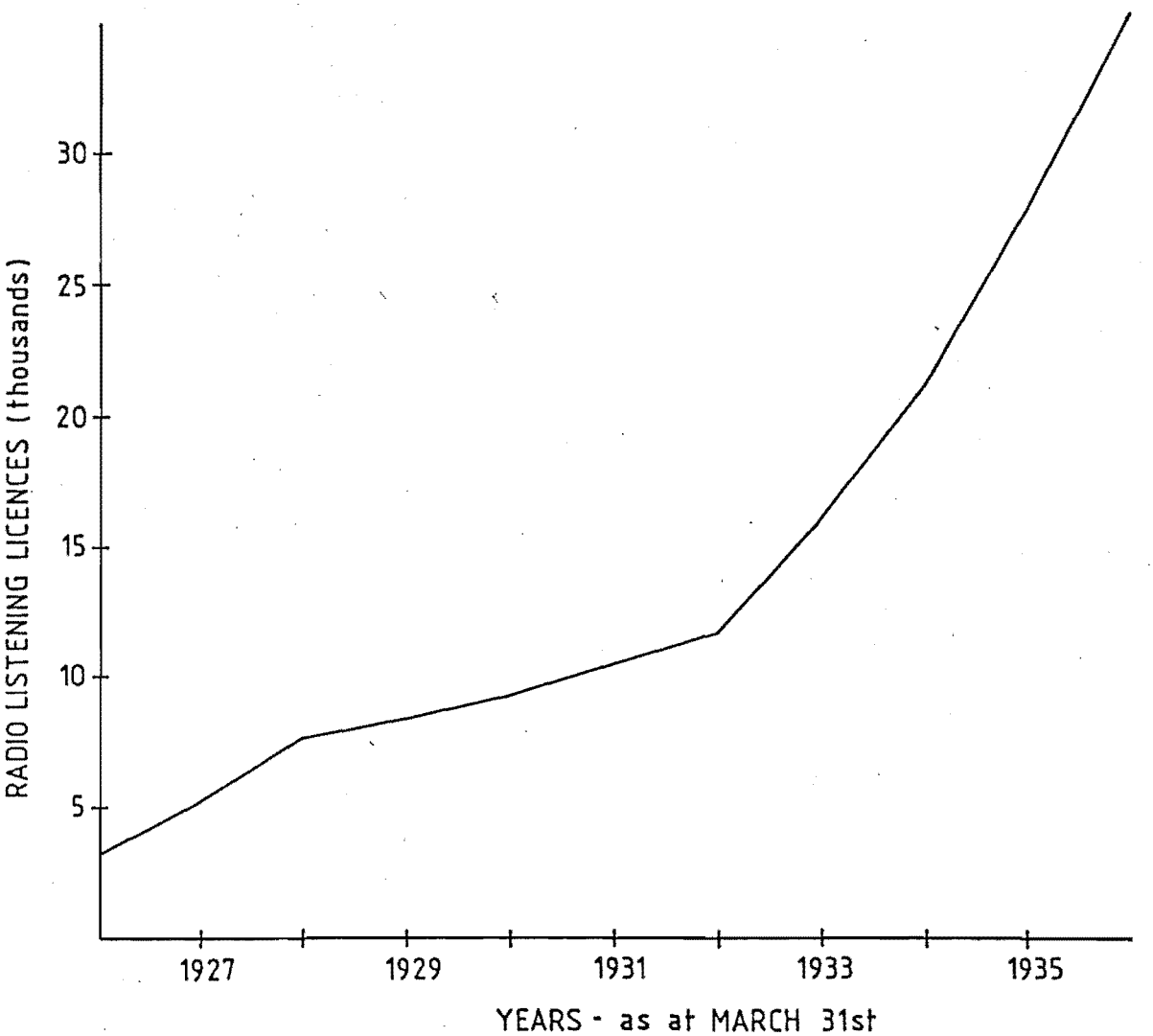
42. Times, 15 December, 1933.

43. NZYB, 1936, p.290.

44. Information from James Younger, radio salesman during the 'thirties.

FIG. 5.2: RADIO LISTENING LICENCES IN CANTERBURY, 1925-36



Source: NZYB, 1927-37.

of households. Many of the radios in Christchurch would have been installed in shops or factories,[45] but higher worker incomes and proximity to more than one radio station probably encouraged a higher rate of radio ownership in the city.

The number of hours during which people could listen in also increased markedly during the 1926-36 decade. The official 3YA was broadcasting only 63 hours per week in 1927, with Tuesdays entirely silent.[46] By March, 1933, this had expanded to 79 hours, spread over the whole week.[47] In 1934 there was a further increase to 105 hours, plus 28 hours from 3YL, the newly acquired "alternative" station.[48] Private radio enterprises were not numerous in Christchurch - in 1931 the city had one, as had Eketahuna.[49] But they had strong popular support, not least because of their emphasis on "light entertainment". This support enabled private radio to survive through repeated government refusals to sanction "aerial advertising"[50] and the state purchase of the existing

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45. A "radio plebiscite" carried out by the Star in 1927 had a response of 955 from factories, as against 1434 from homes. The survey showed the overwhelming popularity of "entertainment, not education". Popular music, songs and musical comedy were the categories most strongly favoured by the predominantly working-class readers of the Star. Over half the radios reported in the "plebscite" were crystal sets, including two-thirds of those in homes. Star, 19 November, 1927.

46. NZYB, 1928, p.406. In addition, many people listened regularly to Australian stations and some even further afield. As valve sets became more prevalent, such options doubtless became more widespread.

47. NZYB, 1933, p.302.

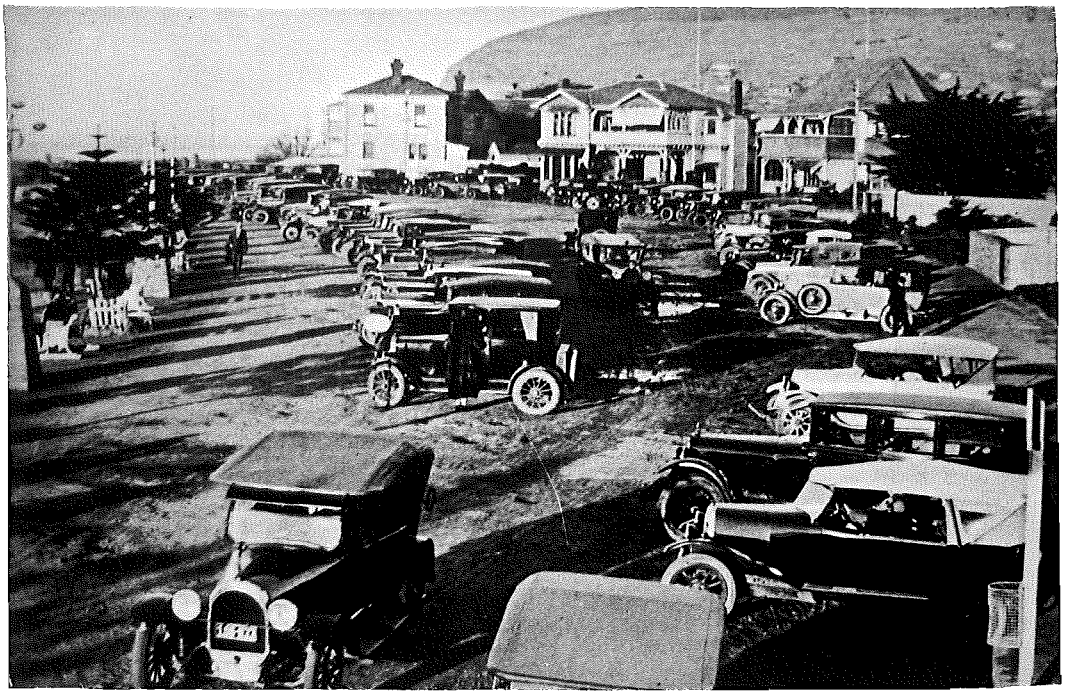
48. NZYB, 1935, p.295.

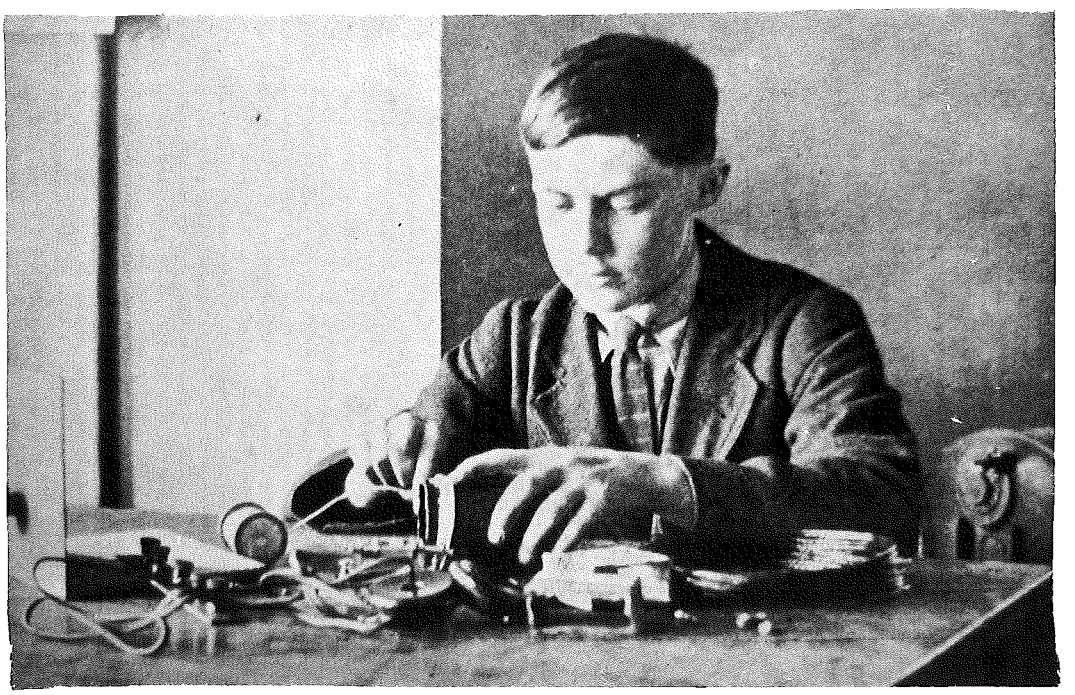
49. T.Scott (ed.), Scott's Radio Handbook, sixth edition, Christchurch 1931, p.36-37.

50. Star, 11 November, 1933. Most of the newspaper's readers would probably have disagreed with the claim that the loss of the "B" stations "would be a small price to pay" to avoid such advertising - "the greatest of all curses". However, the interests of editors and listeners tended to diverge.

19. Sunday at Sumner and an incipient parking problem. (G. Ogilvie, The Port Hills of Christchurch, Wellington, 1978, p.33.)

20. Child's play. Another aspiring radio technician assembles his own crystal set. (Weekly Press and Referee, 19 May, 1927.)





private station in 1933. Anger at what were seen as government attempts to "strangle" private radio led to considerable agitation shortly before the 1933 general election and may have contributed some support to Labour, which appeared to be guaranteeing the commercial survival of the "ZB" stations.[51]

The depression certainly had some effect on the size of crowds at sporting events where an admission fee was charged. In rugby, by far the largest formal sport, this was particularly evident at major inter-club matches. In 1926 the final between Old Boys and Merivale drew ten thousand spectators, as did the deciding game between Old Boys and Christchurch in 1929.[52] These totals were not equalled during the early 'thirties, despite the fact that by that time rugby crowds could expect to have been swelled by an influx of youths born during the post-war "baby boom". The 1931 inter-club final attracted a crowd of only six thousand.[53] The drop in gate receipts forced the local

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51. R.M. Burdon, The New Dominion, Wellington, 1965, p.307. There were a number of links between Labour and the "B" stations, not least being their common popularity amongst working people. In Christchurch one of the most popular announcers, Gracie Green, was the daughter of a Labour member of the North Canterbury Hospital Board. A son of the latter was one of the two principal owners of 3ZM, the local "B" station. J. Hall, The History of Broadcasting in New Zealand, 1920-1954, Wellington, 1980, p.76. In Auckland, the Rev. Scrimgeour was a strong supporter of Labour. C. Scrimgeour, J. Lee, T. Simpson, The Scrim-Lee Papers, Wellington, 1976, p.7.

52. L. Saunders, The Canterbury Rugby History, 1879-1979, Christchurch, 1979, p.22.

53. Ibid., p.31.

union to fall back on its insurance against such losses.[54] Many of the seven thousand spectators who attended the first major match in 1932 were attending for more than the rugby.[55] With a number of "specials" playing, including the brilliant winger, G.F. Hart, several sympathisers of the striking tramway men and their unemployed supporters turned up to barrack. No doubt many others came along to see the show.

The fall in attendance at representative games was rather less marked. During the economically bleak and uncertain winter of 1933 a crowd of over twenty-five thousand made its way to Lancaster Park to see Canterbury turn back Southland's challenge for the Ranfurly Shield.[56] This was a record for a Shield match. When demographic factors are taken into account, the 1933 figure appears roughly comparable with the 23,200 spectators at the park in 1926 when Hawke's Bay brought the Shield south - and took it home again.[57] International games were too few during the interwar years to provide a good comparison between depressed and comparatively prosperous times. Numbering approximately twelve thousand, the crowd which witnessed Canterbury's victory over the Australian tourists in 1931 was under half the estimated twenty-five thousand who attended the clash between the local province and the British team in 1930.[58] However, the weather was extraordinarily miserable for the game in 1931.

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54. Sun, 27 May, 1931.
55. Sun, 7 May, 1932.
56. Press, 21 August, 1933.
57. Saunders, op.cit., p.28.
58. Ibid., p.36; Press, 31 August, 1931.

Furthermore, it was against a much less prestigious international team with many fewer compatriots in the local population. The gate at the game against the Springboks in 1921 had registered 10,685, but that Canterbury triumph was also during a particularly sharp depression.[59] No test match was played in Christchurch during that tour, or as part of the Australian visit in 1931.

Attendances at many rugby games within the city were partly sustained by the decision of the Canterbury Rugby Union to provide special tickets to the unemployed. Initially these passes were distributed free from the Labour Department's Employment Bureau at the rate of four hundred a week, a total of eleven thousand being handed out during the 1932 season.[60]

It is also probable that Canterbury's hold on the Ranfurly Shield from 1931 to 1934 kept interest in the sport generally high throughout this period. At the beginning of 1934 local officials considered that the union had had "a couple of good seasons".[61] Certainly possession of the "log of wood" swelled the numbers of spectators and players during later periods of Canterbury ascendancy, particularly during the 'fifties and the 'eighties. Those fit or enthusiastic enough to play rugby do not appear to have been put off by economic stringency during the early 'thirties. The number of "football"

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59. Saunders, op.cit., p.22.

60. Press, 28 September, 1932; J.K. Moloney, Rugby Football in Canterbury, 1929-1954, Christchurch, 1954, p.30. The Canterbury union raised £400 for the Mayor's Relief of Distress Fund during the same year.

61. Times, 13 March, 1934.

grounds prepared and charged for by the Christchurch City Council increased substantially during the depression decade.[62] From 20 in 1925 the total grew to 27 in 1930 and 33 in 1933. In 1931 a new club - Athletic, was successfully launched in Christchurch.[63]

In addition, it is virtually impossible to separate the short-term effects of the economic crisis from the long-term trend in the popularity of rugby and other sports amongst spectators. Whereas crowds of ten thousand were exceptional at club games in Christchurch in the late 'twenties, they had been relatively frequent during the early part of the decade.[64] The Marist versus Merivale encounter at the end of the 1923 season brought 13,665 spectators through the Lancaster Park turnstiles. Not only did this record stand through the depression years, it was not seriously challenged when prosperity returned before the Second World War, despite the substantial increase in the potential crowd due to the increase in the adult male population. In fact, the 1923 figure still stands as a record for a crowd at an inter-club fixture in Christchurch. Spectator numbers at the city's international games during the 'thirties also illustrates this trend. During the 1937 Springbok Tour of New Zealand, 26,500 watched South Africa avenge its previous defeat at the hands of Canterbury.[65] However,

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62. Christchurch City Council, Parks and Reserves Report, 1925-34.
63. Saunders, op.cit., p.31.
64. Ibid., p.22.
65. Moloney, op.cit., p.73.

this crowd was less than two thousand larger than that which had witnessed the province's previous comparable international game seven years earlier. The test match in Christchurch in 1937 had a gate of 41,600, not a remarkable increase on the 35,500 for the game against the British in 1930. In particular, there was much more private motor transport available for rural rugby fans throughout the South Island to get to railheads or directly to Christchurch.

New technology - including the motor car - played a central role in the long-term decline in the size of crowds at rugby games. The possibility of a Saturday afternoon drive, and pressure from the family to make sure one was forthcoming, must have contributed to the reduction in numbers of spectators in relation to the total adult population. This would seem to be indicated by the greater fall-off in gates at inter-club matches compared with the major international fixtures. The latter were at least setting new records, even if their growth lagged behind the demographic potential. Radio must also have been contributing to this relative decline in crowd sizes. On the one hand, it was an alternative attraction, providing a different form of entertainment on a Saturday afternoon (or evening where a trip to a game meant a journey of several hours). Commentaries at important race-meetings in other centres would have provided particular competition for the side-line sportsman. There were no transistors and therefore no opportunity to combine the two attractions. On the other hand, radio commentaries of major matches must have thinned the crowds,

particularly at inter-club fixtures, in bad weather or where a major match was being broadcast from another centre. A Christchurch businessman and stalwart of the Douglas Social Credit League, Alan Allardyce, provided the first New Zealand commentary on a rugby match in 1926. There was strong opposition to the broadcasting of matches by the Canterbury Rugby Union to 1931.[66] However, they could not prevent broadcasts of international matches or stop listeners from hearing commentaries from other centres. By 1933 local broadcasts were again being made.[67] Even the cinema presented some competition for organised spectator sport. The introduction of sound equipment into the cinema was certainly a great boon to the New Zealand rugby fan. Now he could listen to commentaries on films of the All Black's exploits on tour overseas rather than have to read captions. The technical quality of films and film-making techniques had also improved greatly. However, the cinema was also a competitor for the spectator's often very limited discretionary shillings and "matinee" performances in the afternoons generally attracted a lower charge for admission than those in the evening.

The competition for patronage between a traditional sport such as rugby and new forms of recreation based on new technology was particularly fierce during the 'thirties. Working hours were not substantially reduced until the end of 1936, and even then a significant number of industries retained more than forty-hour weeks. Shops remained open

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66. Hall, op.cit., p.43.

67. Times, 13 March, 1934.

on Saturdays until the early 'forties. On the other hand, Sunday sport was banned in most places, and certainly in Christchurch City - a ban which was strongly supported by most of the Labour Council.[68] This meant that the time available for daytime recreation continued to be severely restricted for those in employment. Any new attraction, whether motoring, golfing, skiing, or afternoon radio-listening tended to compete for that time with existing sports.[69] This competition for time was in addition to the financial competition between ticket-sales at matches, the box-office, the garage, the hire-purchase charge on the radio and the radio licence.

Some of the extra "football" grounds prepared by City Council staff during the 'thirties may have been devoted to Rugby League or Association Football. Certainly the professional rugby game had additional attractions for working-class athletes during the depression, with the prospect of gaining paid contracts with Australian or British sides. A number of players from the Sydenham Club switched from the amateur code during the early 'thirties.[70] On the other hand, league appears to have been attracting greater numbers of players even during the comparatively prosperous days of the mid-'twenties. In 1926 the code recorded a total New Zealand club membership of 4614, compared with 3818 during the previous year.[71] The advent of overseas

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68. Sun, 27 March, 1934.

69. The early 'fifties saw an increase in the sizes of crowds at Lancaster Park over the early 'thirties, in relation to the size of the male adult population during the two periods. By then there was compulsory closing of shops on Saturdays, outside of certain localities such as New Brighton, and average full-time working hours were well down

70. Saunders, op.cit., p.31.

71. NZYB, 1927, p.925.

tours by national league teams and visits by professional sides to this country no doubt had a major influence on the popularity of the code. Nevertheless, there was a distinct fall in attendances at league matches in Auckland during the early 'thirties, and there the same trend was probably evident in Christchurch.[72] League support was heavily concentrated in working-class areas, particularly amongst the unskilled, those very hard-hit by unemployment.

Evidence from other centres suggests continuing strong spectator interest in cricket. There was a record gate of twenty thousand on one day during the game between Wellington and the England team in early 1933.[73] Auckland also filled its stands and embankment.[74] On the other hand, the tourists were the notorious "bodyline" or "leg theory" team, returning from an enraged but beaten Australia. As with the football, the number of cricket grounds prepared for cricket by the Christchurch City Council showed a substantial increase during the early 'thirties. There were 22 in the 1925-26 season, 25 in 1927-28 and 34 in 1931-32. The total peaked at 37 in 1932-33.[75] In addition, there were a large number of pitches let at ten shillings a day. These numbered 138 in 1930-31 and 153 in 1932-33. The generally favourable weather of these years may well have contributed to this enthusiasm, but the inability of most people to afford to travel was probably the major factor.

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72. W. Davidson, Rugby League, 1908-1947, Auckland, 1947, p.25-32.

73. D. Neely, 100 Summers: A History of Wellington Cricket, Auckland, 1975, p.125.

74. Auckland Cricket Association, 100 Not Out, Auckland, 1983, p.52-3.

75. Christchurch City Council, Parks and Reserves Report, 1925-33.

Judging by totalisator betting figures, and the stakes offered at races, the horse-racing industries were badly affected by the depression.[76] However, these figures almost certainly exaggerate the decline in spectator and even gambler interest in trotting and galloping. In 1933 a large increase was noted in the New Zealand Cup Day crowd at Riccarton, but this was not reflected in a great increase in betting turnover.[77] Unemployment itself gave men on a few days relief work more opportunity to place "off-course" bets in the only way possible - with a bookie. One "reliable source" placed the number of bookies at work in Christchurch in 1932 at five hundred.[78] They were particularly busy on the day that relief payments were made.[79]

The coincidence of major trotting and galloping meetings during August and later during Carnival Week in November affords some basis for comparison between the two forms of horse-racing. On the basis of totalisator turnover, trotting did not suffer as badly as its rival. Comparison between the amounts wagered at the August meetings of the Metropolitan Trotting Club and the Canterbury Jockey Club show falls of 51% and 56% respectively between 1929 and 1932.[80] Certainly this was an era of strong interest in light-harness racing, particularly in Christchurch, with the local wonder-horse, Harold Logan, setting the pace. In April, 1934, a crowd of 22,500 gathered on the course at Addington to see him narrowly

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76. P. Oakley, The Handling of Depression Problems in Christchurch, unpublished MA thesis, Canterbury University, p.188.

77. Press, 6, 8 November, 1933.

78. Star, 17 January, 1933.

79. Star, 24 March, 2 November, 1933.

80. Oakley, op.cit., loc.cit.

beaten by the Australian horse Walla Walla in a special match-race.[81] However, crowd numbers were always approximate at Addington, with many clear views from structures outside and the tracks close proximity to the city. This was particularly so during the New Zealand Cup in November:

> It is also a fact, obvious enough to those inside the ground, that many hundreds, possibly a few thousands of people, contrive to spare a half hour or so from daily tasks to see it from vantage points outside the ground.[82]

The urban and comparatively plebian nature of trotting also assisted it to hold its audience. Sheepfarmers in particular had suffered a very large drop in their incomes and many eschewed the long car journey neccssary to attend. Other considerations had to be taken into account at such a social event: "There was also the all-important viewpoint of the women-folk, who without their newest smartness to wear would not go near the course".[83] The Press reported numerous reunions of friends at that race-day in 1933. The problem of cost - particularly in the transport of horses - had an even harsher effect on polo, very much the sport of wealthy farmers. There were no games in Christchurch between 1930 and 1935.[84]

The effects of the depression can also be seen in the popularity of low-cost group entertainments. These included mass hikes and mass cycle rides.[85] The trend to motor

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81. Times, 2 April, 1934.

82. Press, 13 November, 1931.

83. Press, 6 November, 1933.

84. Sun, 5 January, 1935.

85. Between 1500 and 2000 people went on a "mystery cycle tour" to Stewart's Gully in 1934. Times, 13 August, 1934.

transport had previously reduced the popularity of the train excursion for the staffs of large enterprises. Now the excursion reappeared on a less formal basis, provided by the railways for whoever was prepared to buy a ticket to go on a "mystery hike".[86] The crowds which packed the Civic Theatre for Community Sings were also reversing the trend towards privatisation of recreation which the motor-car, the radio and the cinema, had brought. Community dances were also popular, with an estimated seven thousand people squeezing into Victoria Square for one of them.[87] With donations amounting to around 3½d. each on average, most had a very cheap evening's entertainment. An estimated forty thousand spectators watched the Venetian Night parade of boats on the Avon during the Come to Christchurch Week in 1932. Five thousand children attended a mass party at Linwood Park given by Sullivan through the Mayor's Relief of Distress Fund.[88] Commercial dances within the city continued to draw large numbers. There were twenty-three such events advertised on 24 June, 1933.[89] Many would have attended by bicycle and cycle dealders reported a large increase in sales from 1932 to 1934.[90]

The amount of travel outside the city was certainly limited by economic stringency. The "unprecedented"

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86. Sun, 21 May, 1934. The local Youth Hostel Association was formed in 1933 and was very successful in its first two years. Sun, 17 May, 1934. During that winter "mystery hikes" were setting new records each week - 650 went up Mt. Grey in August. Times, 13 August, 1934.

87. Sun, 11 November, 1931.

88. Sun, 22 December, 1934.

89. Star, 24 June, 1933.

90. Sun, 9 July, 1934. See also the increase in bicycle traffic in the city in Appendix C.

numbers of passengers on trains in and out of Christchurch during the Christmas weeks of 1932 and 1933 suggest that rail travel was benefitting from the rise in the real cost of petrol and motor licensing.[91] There was also said to be some renewed demand for baches at New Brighton after the decline of the late 'twenties.[92] However, some of this pressure was due to the fact that unemployed people from Christchurch were occupying the accommodation on a year-round basis.

The economic crisis had a significant impact on the popularity of different forms of recreation by restricting those which were most expensive - notably motoring.[93] It also tended to encourage group activities rather than the privatisation of leisure that the new technology was encouraging. Numbers attending spectator sports showed a surprising resilience in the early 'thirties. However, sports and recreational activities based on that technology continued to grow. Even the ownership and use of motor cars never threatened to slip to the levels of 1925, or even 1929. Technological change was altering recreation as inexorably as it was transforming patterns of work.

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91. Sun, 24 December, 1932; Press, 26 December, 1933.

92. Sun, 16 December, 1933.

93. On the other hand, future motorists did well out of the depression, with the construction by relief workers of scenic drives along the Avon, on the Summit of the Port Hills and across McCormick's Bay. Other forms of recreation to benefit in this way included tennis, bowling and, in particular, golfing.

CHAPTER SIX

HEALTH

The immediate economic impact of the depression on Christchurch and Canterbury can be measured accurately enough. Decreases in factory production, prices, wages and profits, and increases in unemployment and bankruptcy are clearly demonstrable. The human cost, the deprivation and the despair, cannot be determined so precisely. However, indices of physical and mental health can be regarded as a very rough measure of these effects. Most of the city's inhabitants were dependent on a monetary income to provide their food, clothing and shelter. As this income was in many cases severely reduced and only partially supplemented by government or private charity, some increase in mortality and morbidity could be expected. This was especially so amongst those who had little to lose in the first place. These included families in which the breadwinner was chronically sick, the indigent elderly and households with many children but low incomes.

No systematic work has been done on the depression's impact on health in New Zealand. The most thorough overall surveys remain the reports of the Director-General of Health to parliament, and these suggest the paradox of improved public health in a poorer country:

> There is no evidence from the vital statistics that the health of the masses has been in any way impaired during more recent years. The death-rate, the infant

> mortality rate, the mortality from tuberculosis, were all lower in 1932 than at any other time in the history of the Dominion. This is all to the good, but it may be argued that the death returns do not represent the true position as the effects of malnutrition are delayed and, while causing sickness, may not have had time as yet to affect the death-rate. The records of our public hospitals, however, do not support any suggestion that there is increasing morbidity in New Zealand as the result of the depression.[1]

In 1933 the Director-General concluded that "this year's figures still show no signs of detrimental effect".[2] The following year "the state of the public health remained at much the same level...as in recent years".[3] Such statements did not make any reference to statistics on the treatment of outpatients at hospitals. These showed a strong rising tendency during the late 'twenties and early 'thirties, with the number of patients treated reaching a peak in 1931-32 and then falling away temporarily.[4] However, it seems likely that most of the rise was due to the attendance of people unable or unwilling to pay regular doctors' fees, rather than any widespread deterioration in public health. This trend was to recur in the nineteen-eighties.[5]

The published statistics on public health in Christchurch broadly support the official conclusions (Table 6.1). The crude death-rate for the Christchurch Urban Area reached its lowest point ever in 1931, and dropped below that level in 1933. The local infant mortality rate was more erratic, dipping to a very low thirty-one per thousand in 1931 but

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1. AJHR, 1933, H31, p.4.
2. AJHR, 1934, H31, p.6.
3. AJHR, 1935, H31, p.1.
4. NZYB, 1931, p.199; 1936, p.138; 1939, p.163.
5. Press, 12 April, 1984.

TABLE 6.1: CHRISTCHURCH VITAL STATISTICS[6]

	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936
Death rate (per thousand mean population)	8.98	9.92	9.49	9.31	9.13	9.57	8.86	9.23	8.76	9.69	9.70	9.71
Birth rate (per thousand mean population)	18.2	18.8	17.6	17.5	16.1	16.4	15.8	14.5	14.2	13.9	13.1	14.0
Infant Mortality (per thousand births)	47.5	54.3	59.2	44.1	39.8	41.1	31.0	38.6	42.2	39.1	37.6	36.8
Notifiable Diseases	744	443	553	658	1409	543	366	428	215	192	152	148
Hospital In-Patients	6161	6843	7539	7986	8186	7850	8017	7669	7681	7826	7999	8224

Sources: CSO, Vital Statistics, 1927, p.139-140; 1931, p.102-3; 1936, p.84-85 (death rate, birth rate, infant mortality); Ibid, 1925, "Public Hospitals-Ages of Patients"; 1926-36, "Public Hospitals-Patients Treated" (hospital patients); and Christchurch City Council, Town Clerk's Reports, 1925-36 (notifiable diseases).

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6. Death, birth and infant mortality rates apply to the full Christchurch Urban Area, numbers of hospital patients to all public hospitals in that area, but the incidence of notifiable disease to Christchurch City only. The latter figure covers March years; all others encompass calendar years.

rising quite sharply in 1932 and 1933. However, between 1929 and 1936 it was well below that of any previous year. In fact, the average annual infant mortality in Christchurch between 1931 and 1935 was actually lower than that between 1936 and 1940.[7] There were also far fewer cases of notifiable diseases reported in the city in the early 'thirties than during the 'twenties. The average annual number of notifications between 1929 and 1936 was 292, compared with 729 between 1922 and 1929.[8] The totals of admissions to public hospitals in the Christchurch area reinforced the impression of better health. They rose by twenty per cent between 1926 and 1929, but dropped sharply in 1930 and 1931. The level of 1929 was only attained again in 1936. In this case, and that of the death rate, the low level appears particularly remarkable against the background of an aging population. Between 1926 and 1936 the proportion of the population in the Christchurch urban area over the age of sixty increased from 9.2% to 12.3%.[9]

Faced with the statistical evidence, some observers were tempted to make the "deduction associating plain living with good health".[10] The temptation appears to have been particularly strong amongst those with secure annual incomes

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7. CSO, Vital Statistics, 1940, p.139-40.

8. Christchurch City Council, Town Clerk's Reports, 1923-36.

9. Census, 1926, Vol.III, p.20-21; 1936, Vol.IV, p.9-10.

10. F.O. Bennett, Hospital on the Avon, Christchurch, 1962, p.160.

of over a thousand pounds. Thus in January, 1932, Dr. W.Fox, the Medical Superintendent of Christchurch Hospital, remarked that it was

> undeniable that many people were better off for being restricted, through necessity, to simple methods of living...A big proportion of diseases sprang from overindulgence...It seemed that with the depression the health of the people improved, due no doubt to the fact that there was not so much overindulgence.[11]

However, there were a number of factors unconnected with the depression which were tending to improve the public health statistics in Christchurch and throughout the country. When these influences are taken into account, and specific areas of public health are examined, the true impact of the depression emerges.

Amongst the factors tending to improve the statistics of public health during the early 'thirties was the absence of any major epidemic of influenza, poliomyelitis or scarlet fever. Such outbreaks appear to occur in an unvaccinated population regardless of economic conditions. A sharp, but brief, aftershock of the 'flu epidemic of 1918 did strike in 1926, elevating the death-rate considerably for that year. Similarly, a prolonged epidemic of scarlet fever swelled the total of disease notifications in Christchurch and crowded the local isolation unit at Burwood Hospital during 1928 and 1929. Poliomyelitis was to strike hard in the late 'thirties but was quiescent during the worst of the depression. The absence of any major outbreak of these periodic epidemic

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11. Sun, 7 January, 1932. See also reference to Professor J. MacMillan Brown on the "boons of depression", Sun, 13 January, 1932, and Professor J. Shelley on the themes "material depression is good for a country" and New Zealand "has suffered more from prosperity than depression". Sun, 13 December, 1930.

diseases during the early 'thirties had some effect on mortality, and substantially reduced the notifiable disease statistics. The latter were further improved from 1932 onwards by the omission of pneumonia from the list of ailments requiring notification.

Secondly, the accuracy of the figures for the incidence of notifiable diseases, and the total number of patients admitted to hospitals were probably distorted by the depression itself. A stay in hospital was expensive, as was a visit to, or by, a doctor. Evidence of destitution might induce the latter to waive his fee,[12] and it was possible to get free treatment under charitable aid at the Christchurch Hospital. However, the necessity to plead poverty and to seek charity almost certainly deterred many from seeking medical assistance. This trend would have been accentuated by the large number of "new poor", those who had previously been capable and proud of always paying their way. One doctor who arrived in the city in 1931 has described the comparative lack of custom, even for practitioners with a wealthy clientele:

> It came as a miserable truth that the medical profession was also a victim of the Depression. As I went on my visits, in Harley most waiting-rooms were empty. The secretary of the Canterbury Division sat at his desk at three p.m., head back, mouth agape, noisily snoring.[13]

Nor would a failure to seek medical treatment for mild cases of notifiable diseases such as scarlet fever and influenza necessarily result in a noticeable increase in mortality. Lacking antibiotics, doctors could provide only a limited amount of assistance to such patients. Nevertheless, one

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12. Bennett, op.cit., p.160.

13. F.O. Bennett, A Canterbury Tale, Wellington, 1980, p.158. See also comments to this effect by a chemist in Sun, 10 October, 1931.

indication that potentially serious illnesses had gone unremarked during the early 'thirties was a sudden increase in deaths from tuberculosis nationally in 1936. Even the Health Department suspected a possible link with the economic crisis:

> To what extent the rise experienced this year is due to conditions existing as a result of the recent depression it is impossible to gauge with accuracy, but it is of interest to note that provisional mortality reports for the United States for 1936 indicated that the decided downward swing in the trend of this disease had been checked - at least temporarily.[14]

The reversal of the downward trend had actually occurred earlier in Christchurch, with an increase in deaths from tuberculosis in 1933,[15] and an increase in notified cases in the 1933-34 year.[16]

The high incidence of tuberculosis during the 'twenties had been largely the product of another factor - the effect of the Great War. In 1914 the rate of deaths from consumption had been 6.67 per ten thousand population, and it was declining. In 1918 the rate was 7.54 per ten thousand population.[17] The total number of deaths remained above pre-war levels for much of the 'twenties as infected returned servicemen and their families succumbed to the disease. However, the resurgence in mortality from tuberculosis in the mid-thirties occurred largely amongst young adults who would have been children during the war. There was also some rise in such deaths amongst those under the age of five.[18]

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14. AJHR, 1937, H31, p.11.
15. CSO, Vital Statistics, 1933, p.82.
16. Christchurch City Council, op.cit., 1934.
17. NZYB, 1923, p.114.
18. CSO, op.cit., 1926-37,"Deaths from each Cause - by Sex and Age-groups".

The war had increased mortality and admissions to hospitals more generally during the 'twenties. The effects of wounds, mustard gas, psychological scars, and parasitic and venereal diseases were undoubtedly exacting a severe toll during the 'twenties. Although the appearance of a number of "burnt-out cases" was noted in the 'thirties as returned servicement entered middle-age, many more of the inhabitants of Memorial Homes and Sanatoriums would have died in the years immediately following the war. The wider impact on wives and families must also be taken into account. In 1933 the local School Medical Officer reported that the children of widows were more likely to be malnourished than those with unemployed fathers,[19] and it seems probable that the same applied during the 'twenties when there were many more such children. Similarly, grieving widows would have been more susceptible to fatal illness. Certainly both male and female death-rates in the 25 to 50 age-range showed a particularly strong fall between the mid-'twenties and the mid-'thirties.[20]

A related factor which affected a wide range of medical statistics was the fall in the birth-rate from the mid-'twenties. In Christchurch, for instance, the rate fell from almost nineteen per thousand population in 1926 to just over thirteen per thousand in 1935.[21] To a considerable degree

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19. Health Department, 35/70.

20. In 1927 the male death-rate in this age-group was roughly .47%, and the female .38%. In 1936 these figures were .37% and .30% respectively. There was no significant "aging" within the 25 to 50 age-group. Use of the 1926 mortality figures would have revealed a greater difference, but the 'flu epidemic of that year may have distorted the comparison.

21. CSO, op.cit., 1927, p.139; 1931, p.102; 1936, p.84.

this marked a return to the long-term decline since the eighteen-eighties after a brief post-war reversal. However, it was almost certainly also a response to depressed economic conditions. Whatever its cause, the falling birth-rate reduced the proportion of the population in an age-group particularly vulnerable to disease. In addition, this group contained many babies dying from congenital defects or needing treatment for them.

The weather pattern during the early 'thirties also exerted a considerable favourable influence on rates of mortality and morbidity. The years 1931-33 and 1935 were extremely mild and dry along the east coasts of both islands of New Zealand and particularly in Canterbury.[22] The cause of these prolonged spells of clement weather was a recurrence of the meteorological phenomenon known as the Southern Oscillation. This appears to be correlated with sunspot activity and involves an unusually large difference in atmospheric pressure across the southern Pacific Ocean between Australia and South America. This draws anti-cyclones further south in their tracks across New Zealand.[23] A similar development had brought severe drought to eastern New Zealand in the early eighteen-nineties, and comparable conditions were to reappear in the early nineteen-eighties. The lengthy periods of fine weather almost certainly had a beneficial effect on public health and morale, and hence mortality. The previous decade had provided some clear

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22. NZYB, 1932-38.

23. R.G. Vines and A.I. Tomlinson, "An Analysis of New Zealand's Rainfall", New Zealand Journal of Science, Vol.23, No.2, 1980; A.I. Tomlinson, "Wet and Dry Years", Soil and Water, October, 1980; H.Coates, "El Nino's Link to N.Z.'s Drought and Floods", Press, 16 July, 1983.

examples of the effect of exceptionally cold and wet weather on the death-rate. The years 1923, 1926, and 1930 stand out as times of both unusually severe weather and high mortality in Christchurch. On the other hand, the record low death-rates of 1931 and 1933 were recorded against a background of outstandingly fine weather. Certainly some contemporary observers were aware of the impact on health of three successive fine winters of 1931-33.[24]

The year 1934 emerges as an exception to this pattern of mild weather and low mortality. Even when allowance is made for the aging of the population, the national mortality rate was high for this one year.[25] Conditions had been unseasonably cool and damp during six of the first seven months of the year.[26] However, although this weather was a sharp contrast to the previous three years, it was not exceptionally severe, and it seems likely that the higher mortality partly reflected the effect of the depression.[27] Nineteen thirty-four was a year of rising food prices,[28] but static relief work and sustenance pay rates. Local bodies were tending to shed No.5 Scheme labour, effectively transferring large numbers of workers to sustenance, old age

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24. Sun, 22 September, 1933.

25. CSO, op.cit., 1939, p.30. The internationally standardised death-rate with distinction between the sexes was 8.06 per thousand in 1934, compared with an average of 7.84 per thousand over the period 1932-36.

26. NZYB, 1936, p.21-23.

27. Both the NZYB, 1936, p.119 and A. Ashton-Peach, The Social Effects of the Depression in Auckland, unpublished M.A. Thesis, Auckland University, 1971, p.62, use this argument partly to explain the increase in hospitalisation during 1934. Improving economic conditions - another argument which both advance - may be a better explanation for this increase except amongst "the poorer classes".

28. CSO, Prices, Wages, etc., 1934, p.3.

pensions and charitable aid.[29] These forms of support almost invariably provided less money, and transference to them could involve a shattering loss of pride. At the same time, reductions in interest rates on savings and legislation for the relief of mortgagors were lowering the incomes of many elderly people who had provided for their own old age. Furthermore, household stocks of clothing, fuel, pawnable items and small savings were likely to be running out after three years of very high unemployment.

The improvement noted in the health statistics during the early 'thirties also partly reflects the improvement of public services during the 'twenties. This included the extension of treated water supplies and sewerage to a far greater proportion of the population in Christchurch. The construction and operation of such extensions were both made cheaper, and therefore more attractive, by new technology. Motor power permitted rapid installation of new pipelines while cheaper electric energy supplied automatic machines for scattered suburban pumping stations. For example, the number of pumping stations in the city council's high pressure water supply system doubled between 1926 and 1936, with the new stations being located in the outer suburbs which had burgeoned with the extension of tram services and the spread of the motor car. The mileage of water-pipes increased by 63% between 1928 and 1936,[30] while the number of house connections grew by 38% between 1926 and 1936,

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29. AJHR, 1935, H35, p.28.

30. Christchurch City Council, Chief Engineer's Report, 1936, p.42.

(Fig. 6.1) compared with a 20% increase in the number of dwellings. In addition, householders in areas without a public water supply were now able to augment their supplies of artesian water by the use of electric pumps. It seems likely that this encouraged greater usage of water in such households - pumping up the water by hand had never been a popular chore.

Electricity also brought about a transformation of the Christchurch Drainage Board's sewerage system. The number of houses connected to it doubled between 1926 and 1936, with most of the increase taking place between 1929 and 1932 (Fig. 6.2). In 1926 less than half the dwellings in the urban area were connected; in 1936 over eighty per cent. Again, it was the new suburbs which benefitted to the largest extent, with the mileage of sewers increasing from 118 miles in 1926 to 284 miles in 1932.[31] This rapid growth was made possible by the installation of twenty-four automatic electric pumping stations. Previously the system had relied upon one large steam-powered station, and four smaller electric pumps established before 1914. These had restricted the municipal service to the central city and some of the older suburbs, and the steam plant had proven expensive to run and maintain. Now the costly system of night-soil collection and the risky use of septic tanks in a swampy city could be largely superseded without a large permanent workforce to tend steam engines. Household living was thus made healthier as well as more pleasant for a substantial section of the city's population, without a prohibitive

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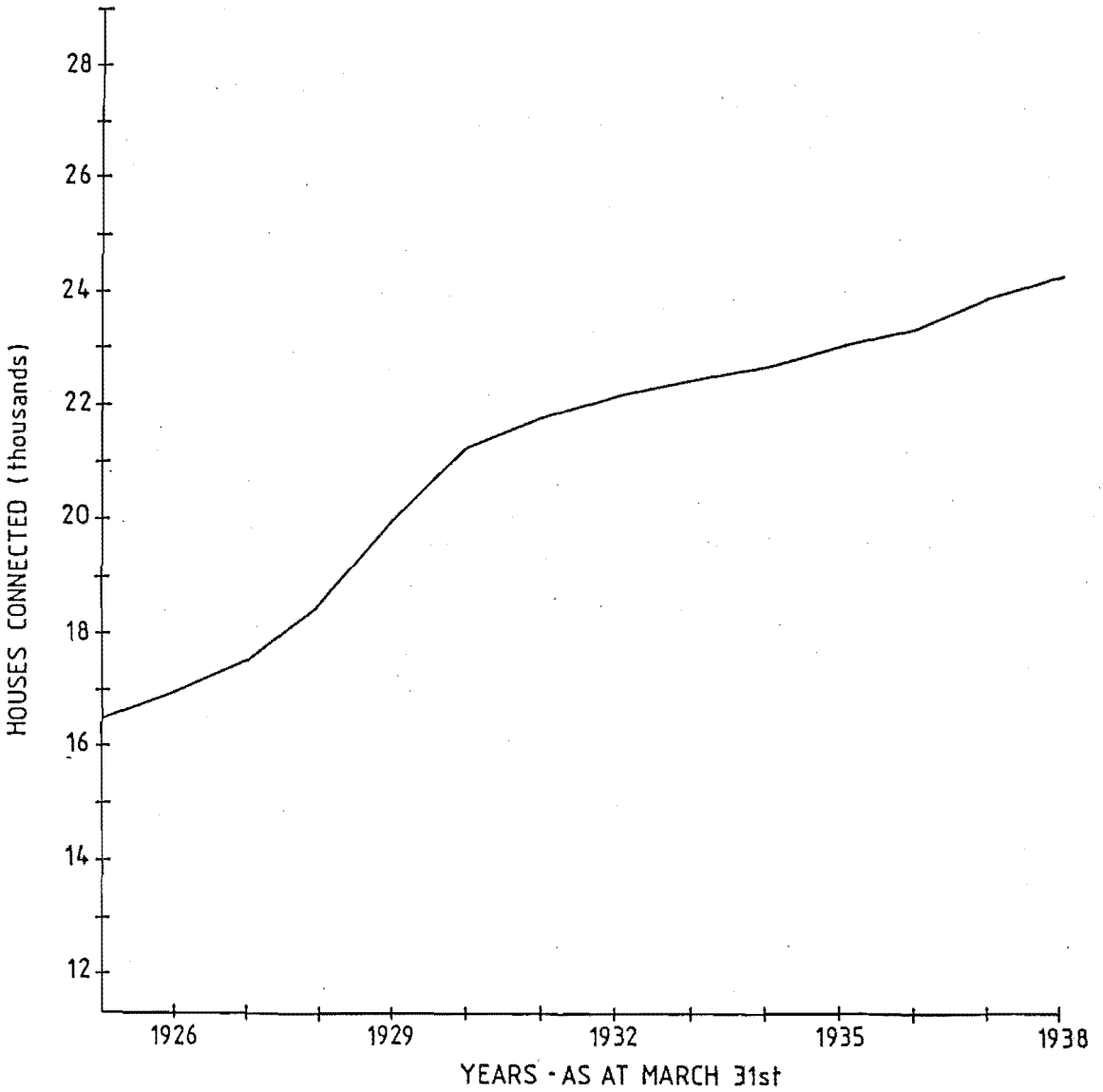
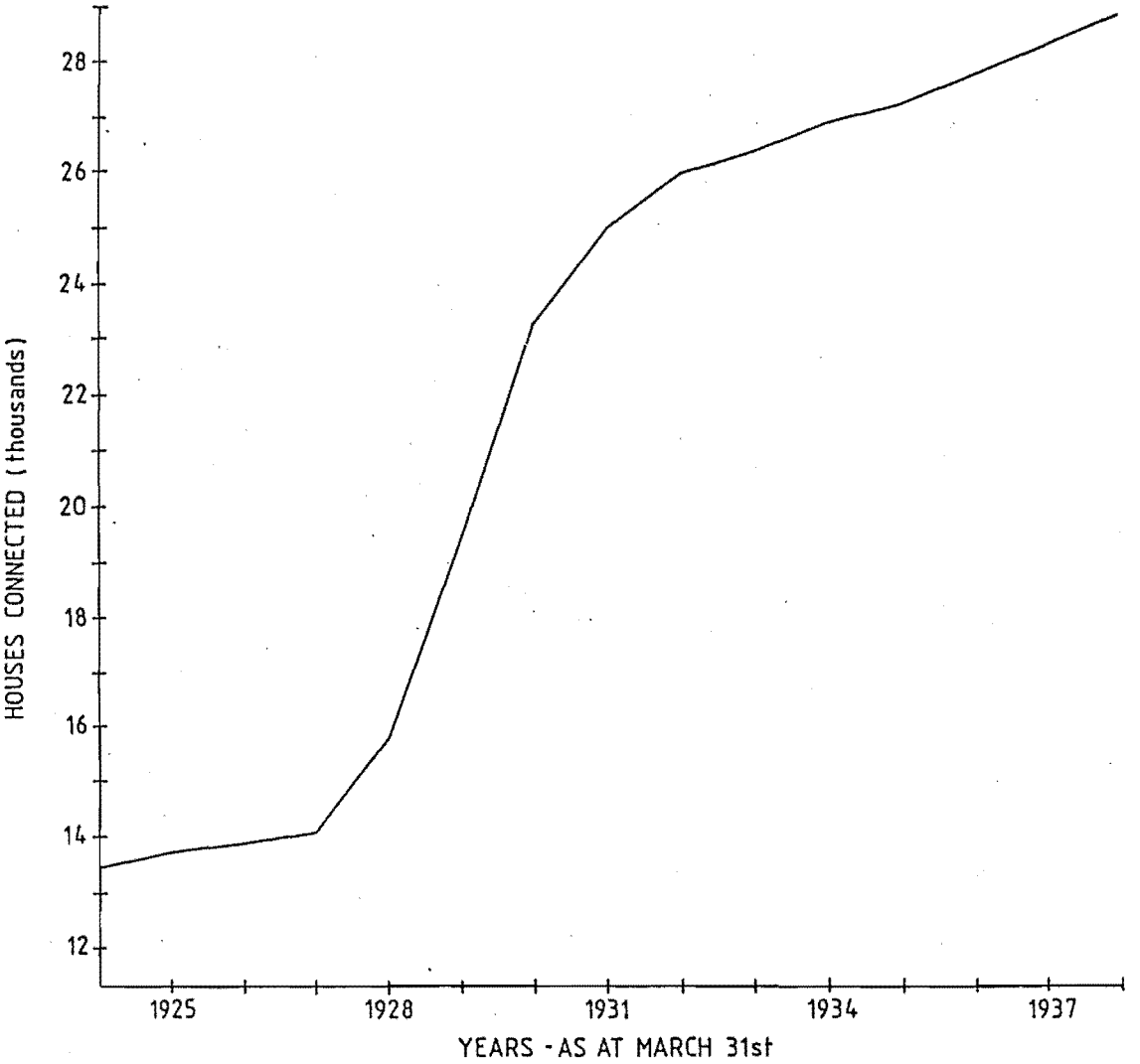
31. Christchurch Drainage Board, Annual Report and Statement of Accounts, 1926-36.

FIG. 6.1: CHRISTCHURCH HOUSES CONNECTED TO MUNICIPAL WATER-SUPPLY 1925-38



Source: Christchurch City Council, City Engineer's Reports, 1925-38.

FIG. 6.2: CHRISTCHURCH HOUSES CONNECTED TO MUNICIPAL SEWERAGE SYSTEM, 1924-38



Source: Christchurch Drainage Board, Annual Report and Statement of Accounts, 1926-36.

increase in drainage rates. As with the installation of electricity, loans to householders were used to help overcome the cost of connection. These loans were provided by territorial local authorities under an Act passed by the Liberal Government in 1908.

Such improvements had a marked effect on the incidence of infectious diseases. These loomed large amongst the list of notifiable cases, and were particularly significant as causes of mortality amongst infants and young children. For example, typhoid fevers, and diphtheria had killed around twelve people a year in Christchurch during the 'twenties and had constituted around ten per cent of the number of notifiable disease cases. By 1936 they were scarcely appearing in mortality statistics.[32]

New technology was providing more direct medical assitance through the use of motor ambulances, x-rays and radium treatment. The Order of St. John acquired Christchurch's first motor ambulance in 1917 and had four by 1932.[33] The Hospital Board ran two others for "infectious cases". Between 1931 and 1934 a Christchurch Free Ambulance Association also operated a service, financed by public contributions.[34] Although a radiographic service was established at Christchurch Public Hospital before the

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32. Six people died of such diseases in Christchurch in 1926; none in 1936. CSO, Vital Statistics, 1926, p.105; 1936, p.86. Nationally the rate of deaths from typhoid per ten thousand mean population fell from 0.54 in 1922 to 0.14 in 1926 and 0.06 in 1936. Ibid, 1930, p.27; 1936, p.32.

33. R.E. Wright-St.Clair (Ed.), The Order of St. John in New Zealand, Wellington, 1977, p.59.

34. Star, 21 August, 1934. This appears to have been very much a working-class enterprise, relying on very many small subscriptions. The Wellington Free Ambulance Service, founded by Sir Charles Norwood in 1927, still operates. A.O. Dare, Ambulance Services in New Zealand, Wellington, 1979.

Great War, its work was intermittent until the 'twenties.[35] By 1931 it was doing more work in a single month than during the whole of 1914, and its output had doubled again by 1937. Radium therapy began at the hospital at the end of 1924, and its operations increased rapidly, both in number and sophistication.[36]

Finally, some account must be taken of the long-term rise in the standard of living in New Zealand due to industrialisation here and in markets overseas. The limited evidence available suggests that real incomes had risen significantly since the eighteen-nineties.[37] This would have left a legacy of improved housing, healthier people and greater reserves of clothing and household goods.

Most of these factors would have served to improve public health during the 'thirties regardless of the depression. This suggests that mortality and morbidity might in fact have been even lower during this period if economic conditions had been better. The resurgence of tuberculosis and the increased death-rate of 1934 have already been noted. A close examination of the causes of death and reasons for admission to hospital reveals a number of other areas in which the depression brought death and suffering.

Increases in psychological illness and suicide provide the most striking examples of harm done by the economic crisis. In 1932 the Annual Report on the Mental Hospitals of the Dominion noted a "definite...increase in the incidence of mental

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35. F.O. Bennett, Hospital..., p.192-96.

36. Ibid, p.203-4.

37. See above, p. 48.

disorder in New Zealand" during the 'twenties.[38] In the following year, however, it suggested that the depression was actually reducing psychological problems:

> One would be tempted to expect that the distress arising from the prevailing economic difficulties would be reflected in an increase in our admissions. Actually, the total admissions, including voluntary boarders, are ten less than in the previous year, and one can only surmise that the spirit of altruism, which is always at its height in periods of national danger and anxiety, is working as it did during the war years. The great occasion is one of real stresses which leave no room for petty vanities and morbid imaginings and introspections; there is a call to action, an exaltation of the community and a self-discipline which tends to sanity.[39]

This optimistic assessment rested upon a decrease of less than one per cent in admissions, compared with a rise of over twenty per cent in the previous six years.[40] At Sunnyside, Christchurch's mental hospital, admissions went from 147 in 1925 to 188 in 1926, and 266 in 1931 (Fig. 6.3). Nationally the respective figures were 875, 947, and 1063 (Fig. 6.4).

Much of the increase was due to the inability of many parents to continue to support their mentally deficient children at home. Around half the additional admissions between 1925 and 1931 were classified as "congenital" or "adolescent" cases. Similar problems contributed to a general increase in admissions due to senility. However, there was also a substantial growth in cases due to stress or "involution" (schizophrenia). During 1925 a total of nine such cases were admitted to Sunnyside, compared with twenty in 1931 and eighteen in 1932. The number then tended to fall away until 1936, when a new peak of twenty-eight cases

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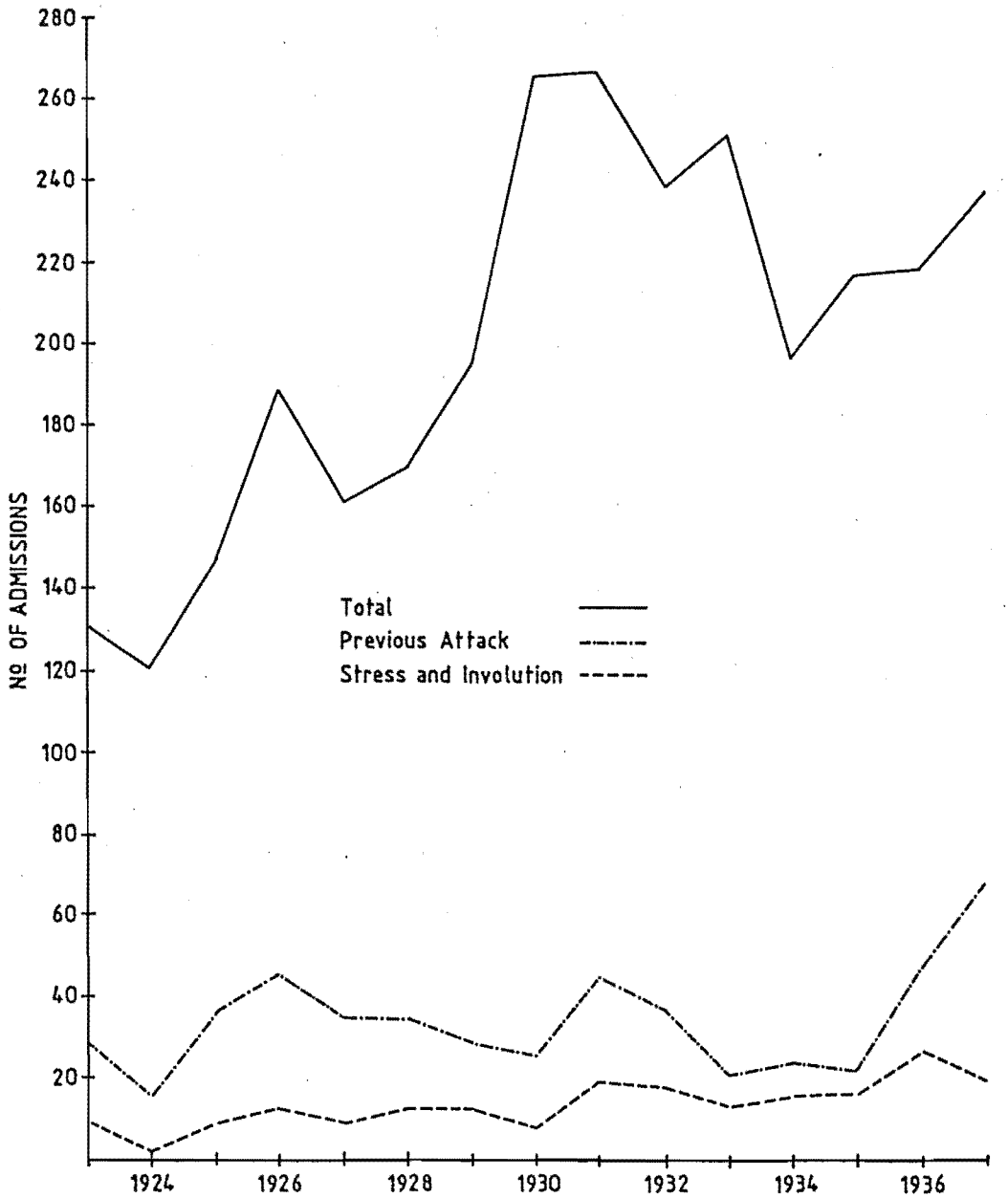
38. AJHR, 1932, H7, p.3.

39. AJHR, 1933, H7, p.2.

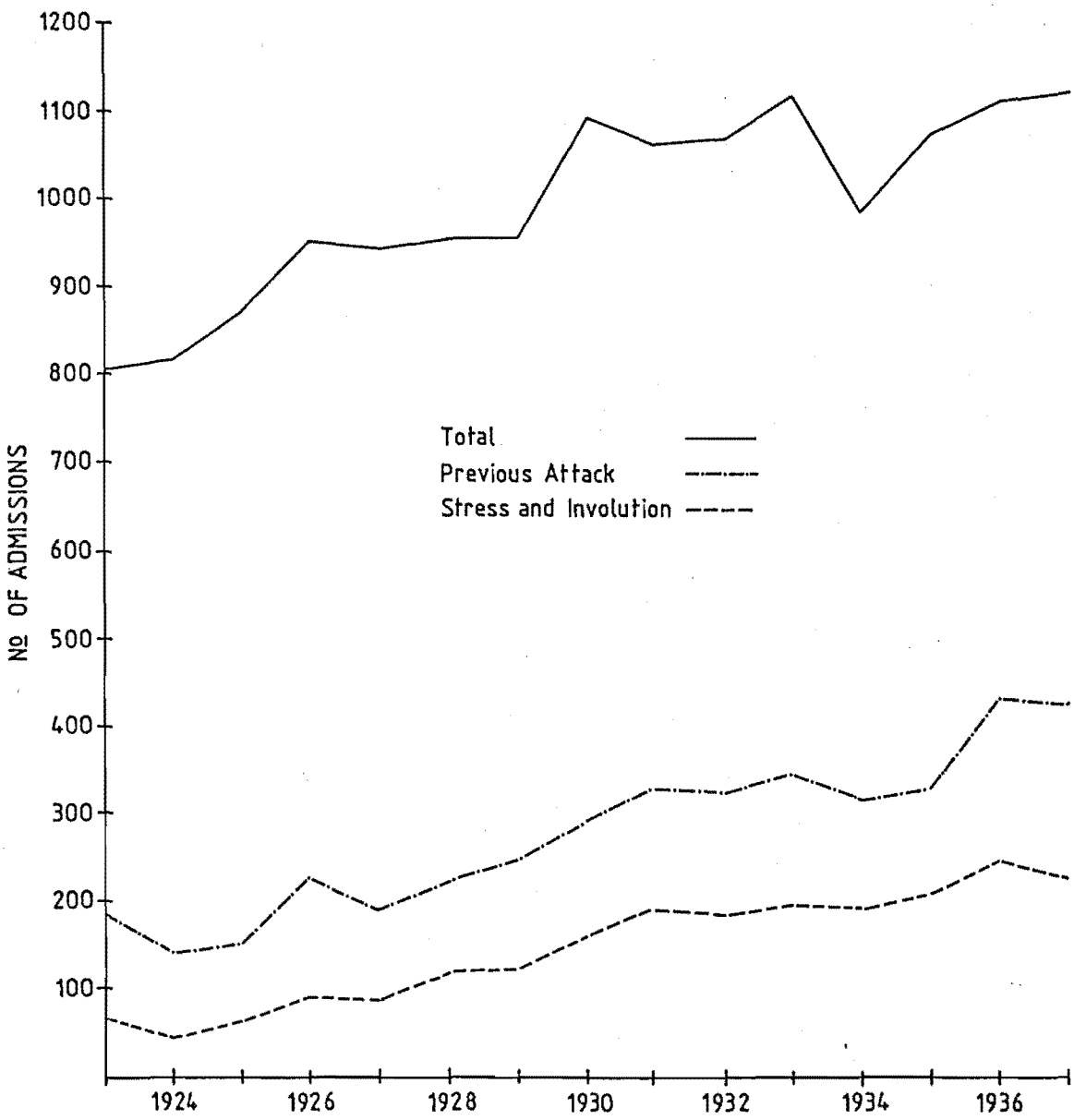
40. AJHR, 1926-33, H7, "Principal Assigned Causes of Insanity".

FIG. 6.3: ADMISSIONS TO SUNNYSIDE MENTAL HOSPITAL, 1923-36



Source: AJHR, H7, 1924-38.

FIG. 6.4: ADMISSIONS TO NEW ZEALAND MENTAL HOSPITALS, 1923-36



Source: AJHR, H7, 1924-37.

was reached. There was a similar trend in the hospitalisation of patients whose conditions were ascribed to a "previous attack". Such people were doubtless particularly susceptible to breakdowns under the sorts of stress the depression was imposing. Other categories of cause, such as senility, may have been similarly affected.

National figures for admissions to mental hospitals on the grounds of stress, involution, and previous attack followed broadly the same pattern as those at Sunnyside, except that the period 1931-35 resembled a high and irregular plateau rather than a peak followed by a trough. There was the same renewed increase during the mid-'thirties, beginning this time in 1934, a year later than at Sunnyside. Outward migration may have kept the incidence of stress-related breakdowns in Christchurch at an artificially low level, but the sample involved is too small to draw any firm deductions. More importantly, the national totals confirm the conclusion that the depression did increase such breakdowns. A comparison of admissions to New Zealand mental hospitals between the relatively prosperous period of 1923-25 and the depressed years of 1930-32 shows a total increase of 17%.[41] The number of patients admitted due to congenital causes, puberty, and senility rose by 66%, whereas those admitted with disorders attributed to stress increased by 164%.

Admissions to Christchurch Public Hospital for the treatment of nervous disorders also reflected the impact of the depression (Fig. 6.5). In this case the first peak

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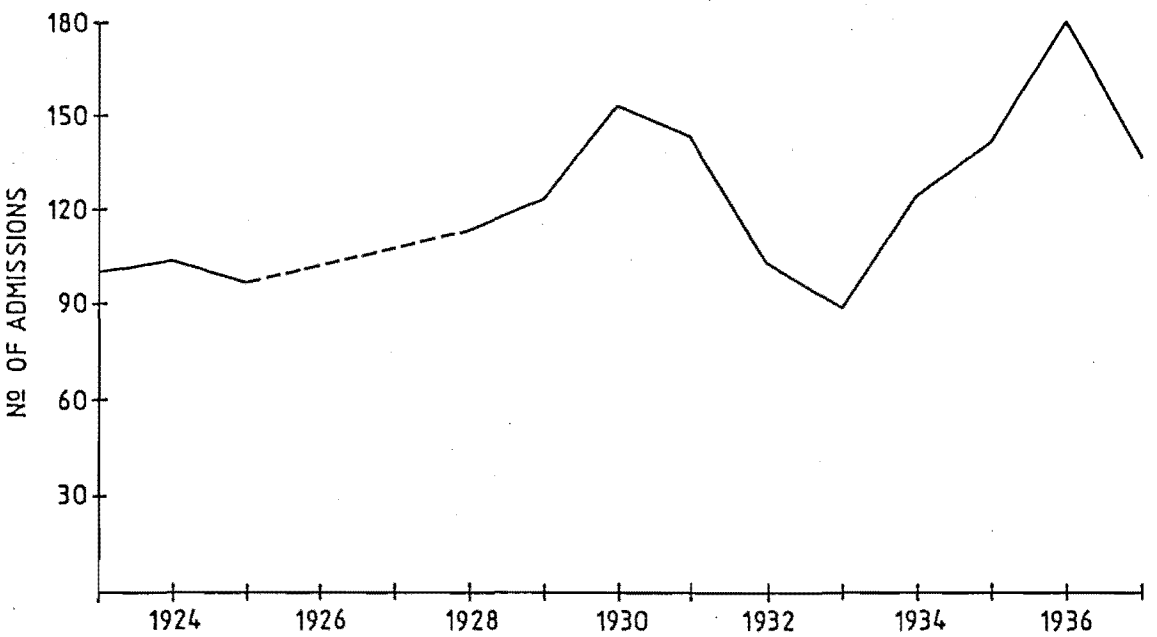
41. Ibid, 1924-33.

FIG. 6.5: ADMISSIONS TO CHRISTCHURCH HOSPITAL FOR THE TREATMENT OF CERTAIN NERVOUS AND ILL-DEFINED DISEASES*, 1923-37+



Source: CSO, Vital Statistics, 1923-25, "Diseases Treated in Public Hospitals"; Christchurch Public Hospital, Diseases Treated, 1927-37.

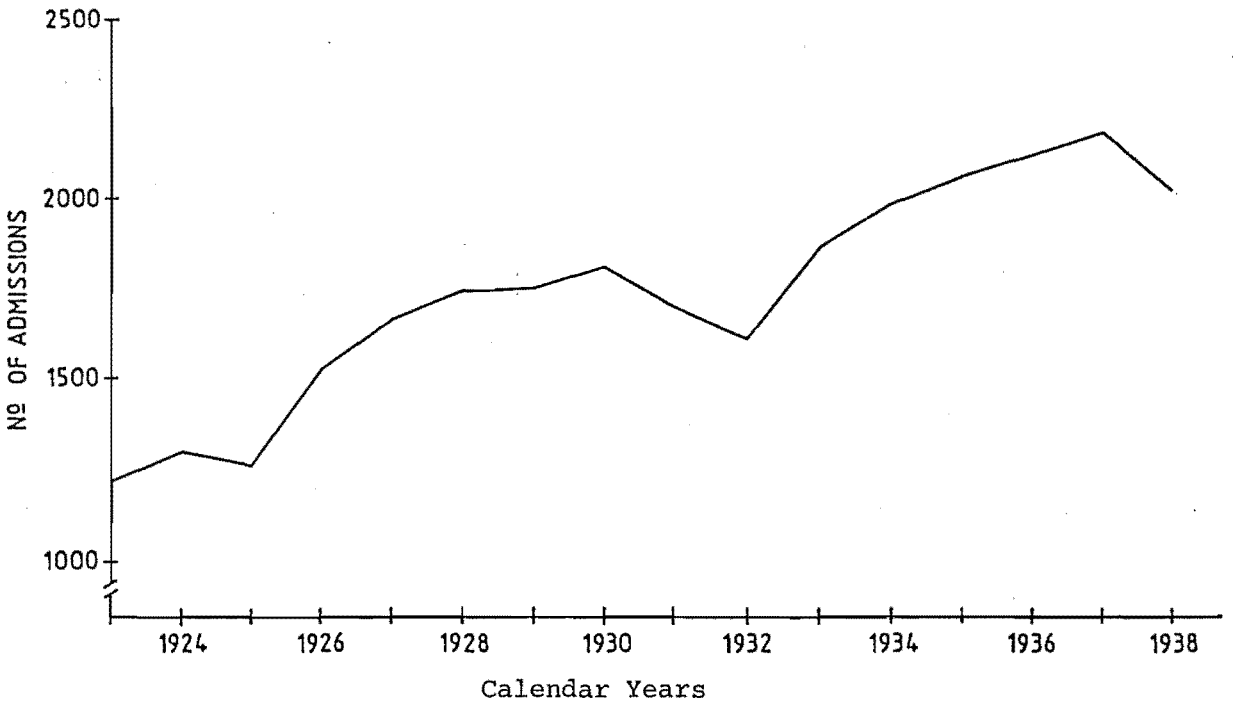
* Neurasthenia, hysteria, neurosis, melancholia, incipient melancholia, mental alienation, psychasthenia, dementia, dementia praecox, neuralgia, cephalgia, nervous impotence, mania, insanity, anxiety state, paranoia, delusional and confusional insanity, mental derangement, nervous exhaustion, insomnia, obsessional state, schizophrenia, exhaustion neurosis, amnesia, tic douloureux, causalgia, mental depression, migraine, general paralysis of the insane, catalepsy, functional nervous disorder, debility.

\+ 1923-25 calendar years; 1928-37 March years; 1926, 1927 no information available.

occurred rather earlier, between 1929 and 1931. There was then a trough similar to that in the Sunnyside figures, followed by the same sort of resurgence, this time between 1933 and 1936. The comparable statistics for all public hospitals in New Zealand were roughly analogous, but with peaks and troughs less marked (Fig. 6.6). The trend of psychological admissions to public hospitals tended to foreshadow movements in the rate of admissions to mental hospitals. It seems logical that the less serious symptoms of stress - those suitable for treatment in a general hospital - should appear first. Furthermore, the patients involved and their relatives would probably have resisted admission to the "mental asylum" for as long as possible. The stigma of having been a Sunnyside patient or having a family member "down Lincoln Road" must be added to the cost of the depression for many citizens.

There is thus a strong chronological correlation between the development of the economic crisis and the increase in mental disorder. Sharp increases in the number of patients suffering from psychological problems coincided with the sudden economic downturns of 1926, 1929 and 1931. These were times of severe personal crisis as large sections of the population struggled to adjust to unemployment, lower incomes, and bankruptcy. Once the initial shock had passed, some decline in new admissions could be expected as most of those particularly economically or psychologically vulnerable had already succumbed. It is possible that much of the decline was due to attempts to economise by hospital boards and mental hospital authorities. This would not, however, explain the sharp resurgences in admissions during 1933 and 1933-34, when the demand for economy was very strong, particularly in

FIG. 6.6: ADMISSIONS TO NEW ZEALAND HOSPITALS FOR THE TREATMENT OF CERTAIN NERVOUS AND ILL DEFINED DISEASES*, 1923-37



Source: CSO, Vital Statistics, 1923-38, "Diseases Treated in Public Hospitals".

* General paralysis of the insane, insanity, mania, dementia, melancholia, psychasthenia, psychosis, mental alienation, neuralgia, hysteria, migraine, neurasthenia, neurosis, nervous debility, insomnia, headache, amnesia, dementia praecox, delusional insanity, paranoia, "other diseases of the nervous system", angioneuratic oedema, syncope, debility, shock, schizophrenia.

hospitals. There were a number of other social and economic factors supporting the downward trend between 1931 and 1933. The institution of relief work was well-established, reducing the fear of utter destitution. Prices for food, accommodation, and groceries were all falling rapidly.[42] Above all, there was a widespread sense of shared misfortune, of "all being in the same boat". Few people seemed to be improving their economic positions. By the middle of 1935, however, most prices had risen significantly[43] while the incomes of several vulnerable groups had not kept pace. The restoration of pension, sustenance, and relief pay rates lagged behind prices, as did charitable aid allowances. Many of those dependent on income from mortgages or interest on savings had found their returns reduced and not restored. Some would have seen their incomes temporarily frozen as a result of government legislation to protect mortgagors. Defaults would have affected others.

Nor was the increasingly visible evidence of recovery always reassuring. Paradoxically this could be a time of despair for the many who found themselves left behind amongst the unemployed and the unprofitable. Elderly workers might well find youths taken on before them, or be rejected while their erstwhile colleagues were accepted. New signs of prosperity amongst fellow entrepreneurs could indicate failure to the businessman still languishing in depression. Certainly the Press noted an increase in the number of nervous

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42. CSO, Prices, Wages, etc., 1926-37, p.1-6. Food prices rose by 5.3% between December, 1932, and December, 1933. By the end of 1935 they were 13.8% up.

43. Ibid., 1935, p.1-6.

breakdowns amongst men prominent in local commerce during 1935.[44]

However, whereas men had contributed the largest part of the increase in the indices of mental disorder up to 1931, it was women that predominated after 1933 (Fig. 6.7). The explanation for this trend probably lies in the role to which womenfolk were generally assigned. They were normally expected to manage household expenditure in such a way as to maintain the family's standard of living. When the male breadwinner lost his job, or brought home less money from the business, the failure was essentially his, though the economic and psychological stress would be passed on to some extent to the rest of the family. But when the income was secure, albeit at relief work rates, it was "the lady of the house" who felt the pressure of rising prices. She now faced possible charges of bad management when the family had to cut its standard of living. Moreover, the progressive wearing out of clothes after years of patching and non-replacement would have put added stress on the household budget and its supervisor. Social workers noted a high degree of emotional strain amongst women requesting assistance throughout the early 'thirties, but particularly at this time. For instance, Miss E. Cardale, secretary of the local society for the Protection of Women and Chidlren from the late 'twenties, noted in March, 1935, that there had been "a large number of mental cases" during the year.[45] Rising prices may also partly account for the increased amount of

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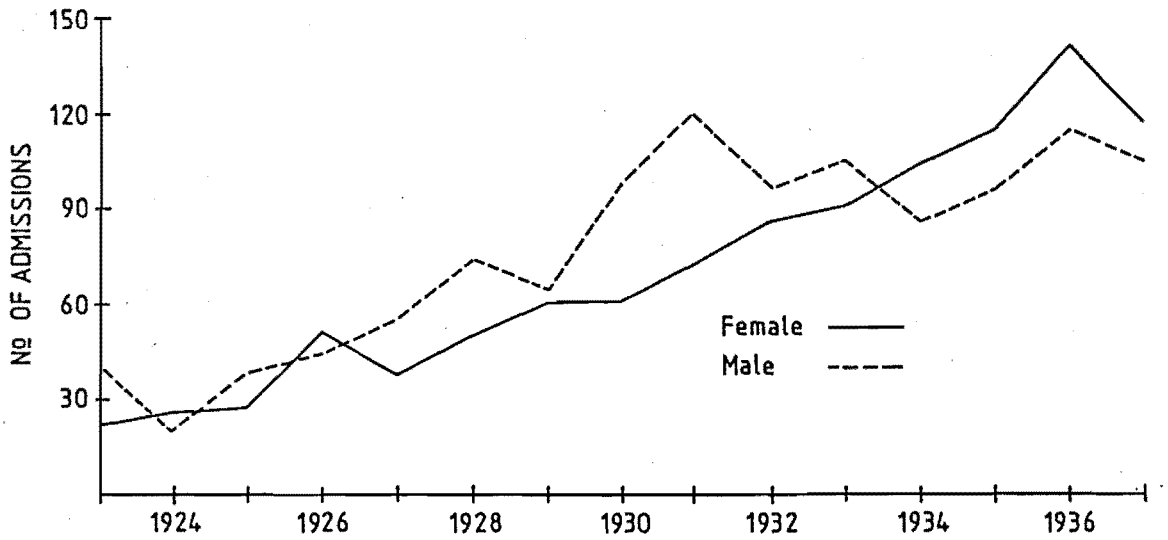
44. Press, 6 April, 1925.

45. Sun, 2 March, 1935.

FIG. 6.7: NEW ZEALAND MENTAL HOSPITAL ADMISSIONS DUE TO STRESS OR INVOLUTION, 1923-37



Source: AJHR, H7, 1924-38.

political activity on the part of working women during 1934 and 1935.[46] A further source of tension was the rise in desertion during the early 'thirties.[47] Clearly more husbands and fathers were seeking to shed their now more onerous family responsibilities. The greater need for men to travel to other areas for work increased the danger of either partner forming new alliances. It is likely that wives suffered more than husbands as a result of such developments, given the values prevailing in most classes. These included sexual double standards and an emphasis on home and child-care by mothers. Conversely, the strong trend towards more paid employment for women may also have increased the degree of stress on them if they had children. The high rate of abortion suggests that knowledge or effectiveness of contraception was limited and that unwanted pregnancies were leading to severe stress. The average family size was still considerably larger than today, and the range of mechanical home appliances within the economic reach of most working people was very limited. Overall, the relatively steady upward trend in the number of female patients admitted to mental hospitals indicates that many women were under severe stress throughout the economic crisis. They appear to have lost on the upswings as well as the slides.

The occupations of patients admitted to mental hospitals also reflected the impact of the depression.[48] Vocations typical of the unskilled working class loomed particularly large amongst the admissions. Leaving aside those with no

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46. See below, Chapter 8.

47. Sun, 2 March, 1935.

48. AJHR, 1924-33, H7.

occupations, over half the increase in admissions of male patients between the periods 1923-25 and 1930-32 consisted of labourers. Other unskilled groups such as farm labourers, gardeners, and seamen also showed significant rises, both in absolute terms and as a proportion of the higher total of admissions. This parallels the disproportionate representation of the unskilled amongst the unemployed. It is possible that some of those recorded in the mental health statistics as labourers, farm labourers, or gardeners may well have been relief workers from other occupations by 1932. However, it is significant that such unskilled occupations dominated mental hospital admissions to a similar degree during the late 'twenties, when labourers alone comprised well over half the registered unemployed.[49] Between 1927 and 1929, for example, labourers made up 38.8% of new male patients with occupations, compared with 33.5% in 1923-25 and 40.6% in 1930-32. The unskilled suffered most both from the economic crisis and the loss of jobs due to technological change, and this appears to have been mirrored in their rate of mental breakdown.

When combined in class groups, the occupations typical of other classes reveal no comparable rises. The proportion of "farmers" tended to decline, while those of white-collar workers and professionals remained at much the same level. Nevertheless, variations within classes appear significant, although the samples involved are very small. There was, for example, a marked increase in the number of "salesmen" and "agents", and solicitors made a strong appearance.

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49. See p. 195.

These groups were under heavy economic pressure, and the latter were particularly liable to have gambled on the continuation of good times in the investment of their clients' money. On the other hand, the number of clerks admitted did not show a comparable rise despite their increasing share of the workforce. Civil servants, a group with a rising real income and considerable job security, vanished from the figures.[50]

The substantial rise in suicide is probably the most serious indication of the depression's effect on mental health.[51] From a low-point of eleven in 1926, the number of suicides recorded in the Christchurch Urban Area increased to thirty-four in 1931 (Table 6.2). After 1933 the total fell away and did not rise significantly until the renewed economic difficulties of 1938. The national trend was similar, except that the depression peak occurred a year

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50. It is possible that they would have reappeared after 1932 as the pressures engendered by the "sinking lid", enforced early retirement, and the effect of rising prices on twice-cut incomes began to take their toll. However, this statistical series was another casualty of cuts in government expenditure.

51. For overseas studies of the correlation between suicide and economic crisis, see Mr. Halbwachs (trans. H. Goldblatt), The Causes of Suicide, London, 1978; W. Breed, "Suicide and Occupational Mobility", in A. Giddens (Ed.), The Sociology of Suicide, London, 1971; H. Brenner, Estimating the Social Costs of Economic Policy: Implications for Mental and Physical Health and Criminal Aggression, Report to the Joint Economic Committee of the United States Congress, Washington, 1976. Also D. Wecter, The Age of the Great Depression, 1929-1941, New York, 1948, p.39-40; G. Bolton, A Fine Country to Slave In, Perth, 1972, p.142-43; and R. Broomhill, Unemployed Workers, St. Lucia (Queensland) 1978, p.70-71. Broomfield notes a tendency for suicides in South Australia to increase going into and coming out of the depression. For a striking recent New Zealand example of the linkage between suicide and unemployment see table on suicides and attempted suicides per ten thousand population in employed and unemployed groups in G. Campbell, "The Out-of-Work Force", Listener, 13-19 September, 1980.

TABLE 6.2: VIOLENT DEATHS IN THE CHRISTCHURCH URBAN AREA, 1926-38

	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938
Suicide	11	21	22	18	18	34	21	26	13	15	16	12	26
Accident	39	41	54	46	61	33	60	33	45	37	45	50	54
Homicide	4	3	0	1	1	2	0	0	5	1	0	0	0

Source: CSO, Vital Statistics, 1926-38, "Urban Areas - Causes of Death".

later (Table 6.3).

In addition, there was a noticeable rise in accidental deaths not involving motor vehicles. A number of these deaths were almost certainly suicides in which the benefit of the doubt was given to the victim and his family. As well as the loss of their public reputation, a merciful magistrate might take into account their need for a life insurance payment in the harsh economic circumstances which often occasioned the suicide. During 1932, there were twenty-one accidental deaths as a result of falls in the Christchurch Urban Area, compared with a maximum of ten in the previous decade. This followed a widely publicised dual suicide during 1931 in which a young unemployed carpenter and his girlfriend leapt to their deaths from Whitewash Head, near Sumner.[53] A number of the "accidental deaths as a result of falls" took place at the same relatively isolated spot over the succeeding twelve months.[54] The Coroner was clearly requiring a high standard of proof of intention to commit suicide before bringing down such a verdict. Less dramatic examples of cases where decisions were left open included one in October, 1930, in which a middle-aged drover was seen to wait and then walk in front of a train at the Clarence Road level-crossing in Riccarton.[55] Nationally there was a particularly strong increase in the rate of accidental death during the crisis year of 1931 - despite

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53. Press, 7 March, 1931, 9 March, 1931, 17 March, 1931. The last previous suicide at Scarborough with details published in the newspapers was that of a young man in 1927. Star, 7 June, 1927.

54. At one stage early in 1932 there were three possible identities suggested for one body found at Sumner. Sun, 22 January, 1932.

55. Sun, 25 October, 1930.

TABLE 6.3: RATES OF DEATH FROM VIOLENT CAUSES IN NEW ZEALAND PER MILLION STANDARDISED POPULATION, 1925-38[52]

	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938
Suicide	130	113	145	145	157	135	157	165	137	123	100	100	111	124
Accident	467	523	477	535	515	542	642	456	416	436	419	468	484	526
Homicide	11	10	16	7	6	8	9	18	10	15	6	12	5	9

Source: CSO, Vital Statistics, 1934-40, "Certain Principal Causes of Death" and "Principal Causes of Death - Numbers and Rates".

52. "The standard population compiled and used by the International Institute of Statistics, and based on the age-distribution of the population of nineteen European countries at their censuses nearest to the year 1900". CSO, op.cit., 1934, p.x.

a fall in the number of motor vehicle fatalities. It is possible that inattention due to anxiety contributed somewhat to the increase, as well as concealed suicide.

The pattern of suicides largely followed the trend in hospitalisation for psychological disorders. There was only a slight lag, with the first sharp increase occurring in 1927 and the dominion peak in 1932. There was no marked second peak, but the number of women committing suicide did reach a record level in 1937. As usual in European societies, suicide was predominantly a male choice,[56] but the proportion of women amongst those killing themselves increased after 1931 (Table 6.4), just as the female share of nervous breakdowns was increasing. The overall trend appears to confirm the impression that while men suffered somewhat more from the stress of declining income, women suffered worse from the pressures brought by recovery.

Details of the background to individual cases of suicide reinforce the strong chronological link to economic stress. At least a quarter of the cases in 1931 involved people strongly affected by unemployment, or the downturn in business activity.[57] Reports on local inquests into cases of suicide noted repeatedly that the victim had been "depressed for some time and unemployed"[58] "was unemployed and worried about it"[59] or "had financial worries".[60] The misery and gloom created by the economic crisis could also lead to deep

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56. A. Giddens, "The Statistics of Suicide", in A. Giddens (Ed.), op.cit., p.421.
57. Figure compiled from reports in the four Christchurch newspapers.
58. Star, 10 March, 1931.
59. Star, 6 July, 1931.
60. Star, 14 July, 1930.

TABLE 6.4: FEMALE SUICIDES IN NEW ZEALAND, 1923-38

	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938
Number	23	32	35	28	28	48	48	37	30	46	44	48	35	35	58	38
Percentage of total 1	17	20	20	18	14	24	22	19	13	19	21	27	23	23	35	20

Source: CSO, Vital Statistics, 1923-38, "Causes of Death".

depression amongst those not themselves severely affected financially. For example, a solicitor from a prominent elite family shot himself in February 1931.[61] A graduate of Christ's College, former President of the Canterbury District Law Society, member of the Christchurch Hunt, and a director of the Press, the man was judged by a colleague to be "worth, on a conservative estimate, £50,000, even taking into account the depressed state of all markets". But "he had handled some large estates which were affected by the present financial position, and had acted for people who themselves were affected by the depression". Very few other cases involved leading landowners, professionals or businessmen. Unsuccessful speculation in land - New Zealand's equivalent of the Wall Street Stock Exchange may have contributed to some suicides. However, there was no local parallel to the widespread self-immolation of prominent businessmen that is said to have followed the New York crash.[62] Those who killed themselves in Christchurch between 1926 and 1936 tended to be relatively obscure individuals rather than local magnates. The only Christchurch stockbroker to commit suicide during this period did so in 1934,[63] when the market had risen somewhat and speculation in gold shares was building to a peak.

The tramway strike of 1932, itself partly a product of the depression, probably contributed to at least two suicides. The only two tramway employees to kill themselves during the eleven years between the beginning of 1926 and the end of

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61. Press, 6 February 1931.

62. Star, 15 November, 1929.

63. Sun, 2 July, 1934.

1936 did so within nine months of the strike. One of them, an inspector, was said to have been ill since the dispute.[64] Supervisory staff had been instrumental in maintaining the service during the strike and had doubtless suffered daily reproaches from ex-tramwaymen and their supporters ever since. Unlike most of those who had assisted the board, they had to continue to ride the trams through working areas, wearing a uniform which marked them as strikebreakers.

However, in many cases it appears that the economic crisis led people to suicide by compounding their existing troubles. For instance, ill-health had been a common cause of suicide amongst middle-aged and elderly men even in prosperous times. But now the depression was exacerbating such problems at the same time as a growing number of war-scarred individuals were entering this age-group. The problem of prematurely aged veterans, "burnt-out cases", was troubling the local Returned Servicemen's Association as early as 1929.[65] The Sandilands Settlement in Aranui was established with the use of relief labour to accommodate a few such individuals.[66] Nevertheless, inquests into suicides during the mid-'thirties frequently mentioned that the victim was a returned serviceman suffering from a physical or psychological illness. Older, chronically sick men were in more danger of being put off work than their younger counterparts. They had less chance of re-engagement and were unlikely to be considered for retraining. If in business, they were poorly equipped to compete in a shrinking market. At least seven of the

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64. Star, 16 December, 1932. The other tramway worker was a conductor whose wife had left him. Sun, 11 March, 1933.

65. Star, 19 October, 1929.

66. Sun, 2, 3, 12 October, 1933.

Christchurch suicides in 1931 were suffering from poor health, and a clear majority of the men involved were aged between forty and sixty. A comparison of the national figures on the ages of male suicides between the periods 1923-25 and 1930-32 also reflects the depression's harsh impact on middle-aged men. Whereas the total number of male cases increased by 41%, those involving men between the ages of forty and sixty increased by 66%.[67] A comparison of rates per thousand men in each five year age-cohort in the years 1926, 1931 and 1936, demonstrates that little of this disproportionate growth was due to changes in the age-constitution of the male population (Fig. 6.8).

There was significant divergence between the occupations of the men committing suicide in Christchurch during the period 1930-32 and those admitted to Sunnyside. Labourers and the unskilled generally were proportionately much less likely to take their own lives than to be admitted to a mental hospital. Less than twenty per cent of suicides in 1931 came into this category. Self-employed, skilled workers, white-collar workers and men from the other respectable classes predominated amongst the suicides.[68] This reflected

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67. CSO. op.cit., "Causes of Death by Sex and Age".

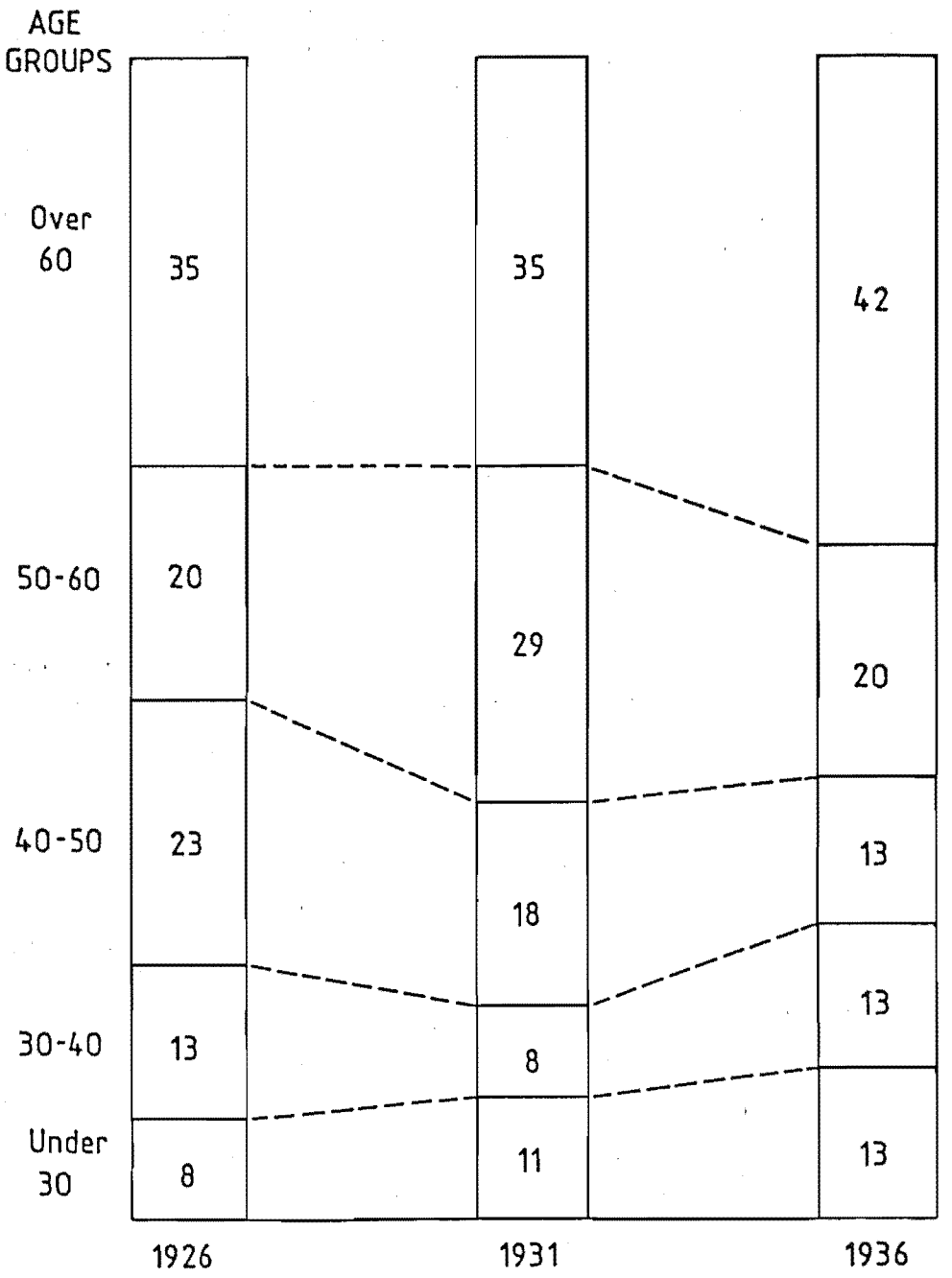
68. This would seem to parallel the figures for England and Wales at roughly the same time (1930-32). Note that these were divided according to the five categories in the British census, which places many self-employed tradesmen in the "entrepreneurial" group.

Rate of suicides per ten thousand adult males.

	Professional	Entrepreneurial	White-collar	Skilled	Unskilled
1921-23	116	128	91	89	98
1930-32	120	137	95	87	87
1950	134	110	89	99	119

A. Giddens, op.cit., p.422.

FIG. 6.8: AGE DISTRIBUTION OF MALE SUICIDES, BASED ON SUICIDES PER TEN THOUSAND MALES IN EACH GROUP



Source: CSO, Vital Statistics, 1926, 1931, 1936, "Deaths by Causes"; Population and Building, 1931, "Ages".

differences in class situations and the different values built on them. The tendency for members of the respectable classes to suffer isolation rather than seek assistance was repeatedly noted by contemporaries. A "Good Neighbour" organisation was formed in Christchurch to try to detect and alleviate such cases as privately as possible. Within a month it found itself with "hundreds" of people in need of help.[69] However, the prospect of admitting failure and having to seek charity clearly put immense psychological stress on men reared on the gospel of self-help. Most of those from sales or clerical backgrounds were also likely to be unsuited to outdoor relief work - practically all that was available. Furthermore, the economic value of their labour was frequently related to their long service with a certain firm and their knowledge of its methods and development.[70] Once such a job was lost, the middle-aged clerk was seldom an attractive prospective employee. It is also noticeable that a large number of suicides by white-collar workers and small businessmen followed incidents of dishonesty or disgrace. In some cases economic pressures may well have impelled a greater number of trusted workers to peculation, or entrepreneurs to theft. In other cases, tighter accounting in order to save money may have revealed transgressions dating back some time. Once discovered, the erring employee faced not only poverty but also social degradation. Trustworthiness was essential to the economic role and therefore to the ethical perception of his class. Men described as

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69. Sun, 18 June, 1932.

70. D. Lockwood, The Blackcoated Worker, London, 1958, p.82-83.

labourers continued to troop through the courts and they dominated the unemployment figures, but relatively few committed suicide. Their ability with the "banjo" was of more interest to a potential employer than a short stretch in Paparua; they would be in no position to embezzle money and their work could be overseen by a foreman. Moreover, a number of their friends, workmates or relatives may well have faced charges themselves at some time. When condemned to unemployment by the economic crisis they could usually adapt quite readily to relief work. Their wages were ridiculously low - a matter for particular discontent because skilled relief workers were guaranteed their award rate when doing skilled work. But the labour was normally poorly supervised and lasted only for a few days each week. Anyway, periods of unemployment tended to be a feature of unskilled labour, which was typically employed on a daily basis. Self-confidence and self-image were not dependent on the possession of a steady job or the same ethical values as the boss.

A higher rate of homicide has also been associated with economic crises.[71] The figures for Christchurch represent a sample which is far too small to draw firm conclusions, although the "clustering" around times of downturn and upturn seem suggestive (Table 6.2). However, rises in the national total suggest that the depression was having the effect of

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71. See Brenner, op.cit., p.iv. Also M. MacDonald, N. Pearce, D. Salter, and A. Smith, "Health Consequences of Unemployment", in M. Abbott (Ed.), Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand - New Zealand Psychological Society Symposium on Unemployment, Auckland, 1982. The table in R. Broomhill, op.cit., p.109, shows substantial increases in homicide in South Australia in 1929 and 1938 - two years of severe economic 'shock'.

lifting the rate of homicide (Table 6.3). An annual average of eleven homicides occurred in New Zealand between 1923 and 1925, compared with an average of twenty between 1932 and 1934.[72] The trend was roughly similar to those of suicide and psychological hospitalisation. There was a significant increase in 1927, coinciding with the raised suicide rate, and a generally higher level after 1930. The peak of twenty-five homicides in 1932 also coincided with the national high-point of suicide, and there was the familiar second peak in 1936. Clearly the same economic and social conditions which were leading to the rise in suicide and mental disorder were bringing an increase in homicide.

This increase appears to have been more the result of greater psychological stress rather than part of the growth in crimes of dishonesty such as burglary and insurance fraud. The local evidence is sparse, but depression homicides appear to have been typically irrational responses to intolerable pressure rather than calculated gambles or attempts to evade arrest. No case of homicide during robbery occurred in the city between 1930 and 1936, but there were two incidents in which murder accompanied unsuccessful suicide attempts. Although other factors were evident in each instance, the prevailing harsh economic environment may well have exerted an influence. In 1930 a Christchurch mother poisoned one of her teenage children, and attempted to kill the other and herself.[73] Her husband was "out in the country", working

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72. CSO, op.cit., loc.cit.

73. Sun, 21 October, 1930.

on the Lewis Pass Road as a relief worker. During 1933 a Dallington man gassed his wife and three children and attempted to kill himself.[74] Such multiple homicides within families accounted for a significant proportion of killings in New Zealand between 1926 and 1936.[75] In most cases mothers killed their children. It seems likely that economic stress often exacerbated other pressures such as loneliness, ill-treatment, desertion, or large numbers of young children, in precipitating tragedy.

In addition, at least two of the homicides occurring in Christchurch during the depression arose from industrial disputes which in turn were related to the economic crisis. A conductor working during the tramway strike of 1932 was attacked by three men at the Lancaster Park disturbance. He died some weeks later from complications arising from his injuries.[76] However, intimidation could be hazardous. In the following year a Summit Road relief worker punched a colleague who had called him a "scab".[77] The unionist fell to his death over a wall. Such a direct clash would have been unusual in normal economic times, especially in so uncontrolled a situation. Supervision was very lax on many relief works because its cost was a charge on the employer rather than the Unemployment Board. This was especially true of the Summit Road project.[78] In the case described,

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74. Star, 15 November, 1933.

75. This is reflected in the ages of those killed. Thirty-two per cent of deaths from homicide between 1923 and 1938 were of children aged ten years or under. During the three years of recovery, 1934-36, it was 38%, despite the drop in the birth rate since 1923. CSO, op.cit., 1923-38, "Causes of Death - by Ages and Sex".

76. Press, 8 July, 20 August, 1932.

77. Sun, 12 March, 1934, 14 March, 1934.

78. See p. 217-18.

the argument had gone on for some time, and an authoritative foreman would have put the antagonists into separate gangs. On the other hand, authority was difficult to maintain where dismissal only meant transfer to another relief job - and almost certainly one more comfortable and convenient than that up at Rapaki.

Besides self-inflicted and violent deaths, there were a significant number of serious injuries as a result of attempted suicides and assaults. A total of fifty-nine persons were admitted to Christchurch Public Hospital between 1928 and 1935 as a result of unsuccessful suicide attempts.[79] Similarly, there were casualties amongst both police and rioters during the disturbances of 1931 and 1932, and a number of cases of assault were reported in industrial disputes. One former professional boxer from Australia was said to have earned the title "Basher Bill" for his persuasive ways during the relief work strike in March, 1932.[80]

The impact of psychological stress is known to have subtler physiological effects as well.[81] One of these is the incidence of peptic ulcer, which certainly rose sharply in Christchurch in the early 'thirties. From a total of seventy-three in 1927-28, the number of such cases treated in the public hospital rose to 124 in 1933-34. Economic hardship as well as stress probably contributed to this rise. More families were forced to buy cheaper meats which required longer cooking, yet they could not afford more fuel. Likewise,

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79. Christchurch Public Hospital, Diseases Treated, 1928-35.

80. Star, 21 June, 1932. The freezing-works dispute of 1932-33 also led to violent outbreaks. Sun, 2 March, 1933.

81. Brenner, op.cit., p.v.

the inability to pay for timely dental treatment or new dentures would have exacerbated stomach ulcers in many cases and might have compelled hospitalisation. It was often very difficult financially to maintain the then prevailing diets for ulcer sufferers, which tended to include a lot of eggs and specially prepared foods.

It seems likely that the occurrence of other medical problems associated with stress - notably heart disease - was also affected by the depression.[82] Unfortunately such effects are difficult to isolate as their impact is delayed and appears to be bound up with other factors, notably the long-term increase in the consumption of animal fats, and cigarettes. There were strong rises in the national death rate from heart disease during the years 1928-30, 1933-34 and 1937-38 (Table 6.5). Allowing for Brenner's rather open three to six year lag before cardiovascular and renal disease death rates respond to increased unemployment,[83] these periods might reflect the stress of the downturns of 1926 and 1930-31, and the cost-of-living pressures of the upturn of 1933-36. The lag of up to two years allowed by Brenner[84] for the response in the death rate from chronic nephritis appears to apply to the New Zealand figures, with a high level from 1929 to 1932 and small jumps in 1926 and 1936. The latter may once again reflect the stresses of the recovery period. However, too much should not be read into the relatively small changes. Some variation is to be expected in any population, and factors such as the weather may have

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82. Ibid., p.37.

83. Ibid.,p.36-37.

84. Ibid., p.41.

TABLE 6.5: NEW ZEALAND DEATH RATES FROM HEART DISEASE AND CHRONIC NEPHRITIS, 1923-28

	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938
Heart Disease (per million standardised population)																
Male:						1523	1694	1853	1753	1711	1795	1894	1913	1951	1987	2118
Female:						1349	1378	1563	1452	1522	1523	1594	1556	1505	1587	1639
Heart Disease (per million population)	1587	1431	1452	1522	1564	1665										
Chronic Nephritis (per million standardised population)																
Male:						269	295	309	326	286	312	295	264	300	272	265
Female:						260	327	312	299	326	273	265	246	272	270	250
Nephritis (per million population)	281	263	298	321	298	327										

Sources: CSO, Vital Statistics, 1932, p.28-29, "Principal Causes of Death - Numbers and Rates, 1923-1932; 1937, 1938, p.37-38, "Standardised Death Rates of Males and Females from Certain Causes at all Ages Per 1,000,000 of Population".

exerted a considerable influence in 1926 and 1930,[85] leading elderly people to succumb to these degenerative diseases a year or two earlier.

The incidence of induced abortion was another area of public health which had some relation to the level of psychological stress and which was significantly affected by the depression. Judging by admissions to hospital on grounds related to abortion or miscarriages, there was a steady increase in the use of abortion as a method of birth-control throughout the inter-war period. This is clear even when allowance is made for the growth of the female population in the reproductive years.[86] Many factors lay behind this trend, not least being the desire to maintain a level of disposable income in a rapidly developing consumer society.[87] Nevertheless, it is noticeable that admissions on the grounds of abortion or miscarriage increased particularly rapidly during years in which the economic crisis was forcing adjustment. This is clear from the national figures between 1926 and 1927, and from Christchurch and national figures between 1929 and 1930 (Table 6.6). During this period the increase

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85. See above p.291.

86. Between 1926 and 1936 the number of women in the 15 to 50 age-group in the Christchurch Urban Area increased by 9% and those between 20 and 40 by 12%. The number of abortions and threatened abortions at Christchurch Public Hospital rose by 85% between 1925 and 1935. Census, 1926, Vol.3, p.14-15; 1936, Vol.4, p.5; Christchurch Public Hospital, Patients Treated, 1925, 1935.

87. Increased reporting may also have magnified the totals. Another factor could have been an increase in sexual activity, possibly deriving partly from a long-term growth in the awareness of contraception. P. Treffers, "The Role of Induced Abortion in the Changing Pattern of Family Planning in the Netherlands", in H. Moors, R. Cliquet, G. Dooghe and D. van de Kaa (Eds.), Population and Family in the Low Countries, Vol.1, Leiden, 1976, p.116-131.

TABLE 6.6: ABORTIONS 1923-37[88]

	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937
Christchurch															
Abortion and Miscarriage	110	89	96			129	136	125	136	154	175	171	178	187	190
Complications						12	26	19	11	37	22	33	23	11	30
New Zealand															
Abortion and Miscarriage	437	661	774	821	947	882	963	1202	1825	2044	2187	1206	2132	2222	2352
Complications	215	232	275	346	401	414	410	442	471	415	353	394	370	402	421

Sources: Christchurch Public Hospital, Patients Treated, 1928-37; CSO, Vital Statistics, 1923-37, Diseases Treated in Public Hospitals".

88. "Abortion and Miscarriage" includes threatened abortion; "complications" include all puerperal sepsis cases in New Zealand hospitals as no specific category was used for septic abortion in the dominion totals before 1930. The 1928-37 figures for Christchurch Hospital are March years, all other figures are for calendar years.

in the incidence of desertion would also have been compounding the effects of financial hardship due to unemployment and reduced incomes. These factors may also have persuaded more unmarried couples "in trouble" to consider abortion rather than a marriage which they believed they could not afford. The trough in the national totals during 1933 and 1934 was probably due to the same economic and social influences which improved the mental health statistics. These included the increase in real incomes due to the fall in prices, and the institutionalisation of the depression - "love on the dole" became commonplace.[89]

In addition to the rise in the abortion rate, there is considerable evidence of death and disease arising from recourse to self-induction or cheap abortionists during the early 'thirties. There were thirteen deaths in the Christchurch Urban Area in 1931 from causes associated with "the puerperal state". This was more than double the average of the previous ten years, during which time the birth-rate had been much higher. The totals peaked again in 1934 and 1935, with nine of the eleven deaths in 1934 attributed to septic abortion.[90] Admissions to Christchurch Hospital for the treatment of septic abortion showed a broadly similar pattern,[91] as did notification of puerperal fever to the Christchurch City Council.[92] National admissions to hospital for the treatment of lacerations to the cervix

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89. By the middle of 1933 both the Essex and St. Helen's maternity hospitals were reporting problems with overcrowding. It was mentioned that the wives of relief workers constituted a large proportion of those confined. Sun, 28 June, 1933.

90. CSO, Vital Statistics, 1926-38, Urban Areas - Causes of Death.

91. Christchurch Public Hospital, op.cit.

92. Christchurch City Council, Town Clerk's Reports, 1926-36.

increased dramatically in 1926, 1930, and 1934. The cost of the application of primitive and unhygienic methods during the depression was clearly very considerable. In addition to the immediate deaths and suffering, it seems probable that much permanent infertility resulted. Furthermore, as the overwhelming majority of those who died were married women, a substantial number of orphans were left as a consequence.[93]

However, the long-term welfare of many more children was blighted by other health problems which had been magnified by the depression. The increase in the number of such problems was revealed by the officers of the School Medical Health Service. Staffed almost entirely by women doctors and nurses, the service possessed considerable experience of the health standards of the children in most schools. For example, the School Medical Officer for Canterbury during the depression, Dr. Eleanor Baker-McLagan, had held the position since 1914. She was therefore well-qualified to judge changes in the average condition of those examined. The district nurses who assisted her also appear to have been well-established as the examiners of particular schools. This continuity largely overcomes the problems of the high degree of subjective judgment in the assessment of malnutrition.

As in several other areas of public health in New Zealand, the statistics on malnutrition amongst school children

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93. L. Smith, The Problem of Abortion in New Zealand in the 1930's, unpublished Auckland University long essay, 1972, p.14. See also B. Brookes, The Committee of Inquiry into Abortion in New Zealand, 1936-37, unpublished B.A. (Hons), extended essay, Otago University, 1976.

suggest that the depression halted an existing improvement rather than brought about a dramatic deterioration. The national incidence detected actually fell beween the relatively prosperous year of 1925 and the deepest depression years of 1931-35.[94] However, the 'twenties do not provide a suitable benchmark. Examining doctors observed repeatedly that a disproportionate number of the malnourished school-children came from the primers and the lower standards.[95] The "baby boom" which followed the Great War swelled the number of pupils in these classes for a decade thereafter. It would also have put severe pressure on the financial and physical resources of many parents, making ill-nourishment and other problems more common. Consequently, the falling birthrate of the late 'twenties and early 'thirties helped to alleviate and disguise the depression's effects by gradually reducing the average number of children in families and particularly the proportion of very young children in need of special care.

Nor can the changing level of child-health between the wars be divorced from the housing crisis and high rents which developed after 1918.[96] Thousands of men returned from overseas service to marry and occupy homes in a country where the construction industry was run down and there had been little building for four years. The resistance of many children to illness and their nutrition would have been affected by the resulting sub-standard living conditions and

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94. AJHR, 1933, H31, p.5; 1939, H31, p.42.

95. Health Department, 35/70.

96. CSO, Prices, Wages, etc., 1929, p.1.

need to pay a high proportion of family income in rent or mortgage. Fortunately there was a lull in the demand for accommodation between the rapid formation of new households in the early 'twenties and its counterpart in the late 'thirties as the post-war generation left home.

Some account must also be taken of the widespread improvement in services during the 'twenties such as piped water and sanitation, better transport, dental nursing clinics in many schools, and the School Medical Health Service itself. In addition, the work of the Plunket Society was making a significant contribution to child-health by the early 'thirties.[97] In the year 1933-34 the society had thirteen suburban rooms and ten "outstations" in Christchurch, besides its central headquarters. Its activities included pre- as well as post-natal assistance and thousands of home visits. There were 1530 pre-school children under the society's "supervision", in March, 1934. This represented about a quarter of that age-group in Christchurch, and the proportion would have been much higher in the particularly vulnerable infant years. The local Sunlight League's health camps helped a small number of older malnourished children in summer.[98]

However, underpinning all these developments was an historic change in the attitude of working-class parents to

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97. Sun, 22 June, 1934.

98. However, in 1934 the League's Dental Health Committee excluded those without "A1 dental certificates", a measure which would have filtered out many of those in particular need. If parents could not afford enough good food for their children, they could hardly pay to have their teeth treated. Sun, 1 November, 1934.

the care of their children. In Christchurch at least they appear to have become decidedly more "bourgeois" during the first quarter of the twentieth century. Looking back at the previous sixteen years from a vantage point at the end of 1929, Dr. Baker-McLagan was convinced of this "rise in standards". She claimed to be "startled at the improvement not only in the condition of the children's teeth but in the care of their eyes and bodies generally.[99] There are no vermin nowadays and skin diseases are almost unknown". Certainly her accounts of confrontations with some mothers during her early years as School Medical Officer contrast sharply with her official reports during the 'thirties. "I know my son ain't no rose, Learn him, don't smell him" was the alleged response of one Sydenham mother to a request that her offspring be washed.[100] Another is said to have given her children their weekly wash by lining them up against the fence and throwing a bucket of water over them. In 1934 Dr. Baker-McLagan reported that the same area had been "dreadfully affected by unemployment. Yet it is a satisfactory school as a rule, because the parents, though working-class, are self-respecting and interested in their children's welfare...The cleanliness of the children is surprisingly good under the circumstances though their clothes are poor".[101] Similarly, "more attention is undoubtedly paid by the children to cleaning their teeth",

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99. Sun, 14 December, 1929.

100. E.S. Baker-McLagan, Stethoscope and Saddlebags, Auckland, 1965, p.135. Also: "If that doctor-woman wants my child's eyes (or adenoids or whatever it was) fixed up, she can jolly well pay for it". (p.133).

101. Health Department, 35/70. Baker-McLagan to Paterson, 7 April, 1934.

surely evidence of greater parental supervision and inclination to spend money for the long-term health of their children. Nurse Maude, an observer with considerably longer experience of local standards also expressed surprise at the good condition of children of the poor in comparison to that of their parents.[102]

The origins of this change of attitude are complex. New technology certainly gave some direct help in the form of cheaper soap, toothpaste and toothbrushes. The inexpensive celluloid toothbrush, for example, appeared about 1918. The sustained long-term rise in the standard of living since the early eighteen-nineties was an even more powerful factor enabling families to spend more on cleanliness and child-care. But the two greatest forces for change were mass indoctrination and the fall in the birth-rate.

Much of the work of indoctrination amongst women was carried out by institutions such as the Plunket Society and Nurse Maude's district nursing association. Military service, particularly during the war, may also have improved awareness of household hygiene amongst men.[103] However, universal compulsory education over two generations was the strongest machine for this and other forms of "embourgeoisement". There was little formal instruction in hygiene, including the educative work of dental nurses, but indirect influences were probably more important. The typical teacher was expected to be a model of white-collar neatness and cleanliness, and

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102. Sun, 21 July, 1932.

103. The long-term trends to shorter working hours and less drunkenness may also have led to increased paternal assistance with child-care. Bathing the children and putting them to bed seems to have been sometimes father's domain. For an amusing example see "Random Reminder", Press, 2 July, 1983.

she undoubtedly sought to impose these values on her pupils. A whole gamut of techniques, from priase to public humiliation, were available to encourage them to emulate her. By the 'thirties almost all mothers would have been conscious of the standards of cleanliness which were expected of their children at school, and the results if they failed to meet them. Certainly an increasing proportion of parents were making sure their children attended school.[104]

On the other hand, parents were more likely and able to assist them in maintaining the required standards because of the fall in the birth-rate.[105] This left more money and time to be spent on each child. Moreover, metaphysics aside, it is doubtful that most parents felt as strong an interest in their seventh child as in their first or last. Above all, the maintenance of modern standards of child-care in a large family without gas or electrical appliances required a greater than normal capacity for effort and organisation. The Education Act may even have lowered standards temporarily by insisting that older girls attend school rather than help their mothers at home.[106] In the circumstances the weekly bucket of water could well be regarded an unsophisticated compromise between the demands being made by the authorities and the pressure of raising a large family. Now mothers could devote far more energy and anxiety to their children's health and appearance.

At least three effects of the economic crisis itself also served to reduce either the statistics or the real incidence

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104. Sun, 15 June, 1933.

105. NZYB, 1931, p.111.

106. C.H. Williams (compil.), History of the Sydenham School, 1873-1933, Christchurch, 1933, p.11.

of malnutrition amongst school-children. Firstly, the withdrawal of the early primers from school as an economy measure during 1932 removed those pupils most likely to be malnourished. Secondly, there was a strong tendency to keep their children at home during bad weather if their clothes or footwear were unsuitable. Dr. Baker-McLagan was certainly aware of this by 1933,[107] and a survey carried out in five Christchurch schools in 1935 confirmed that the practice was common.[108] Moreover, the medical inspections were not impromptu. They were arranged with the school in advance and parents generally received some prior notifiation. No doubt many took the opportunity of keeping their offspring at home rather than risk the humiliation of a visit from the District Nurse. Such a reaction would have been particularly common amongst those parents made poor for the first time by the depression. Because most inspections only involved about half the pupils in any school, it is impossible to assess the impact of such absenteeism on the annual returns. However, in 1933 over one in every six of the pupils enrolled at Sydenham School managed to avoid a comprehensive survey which must have taken a number of days.[109] The elusive 18% contrasted rather strikingly with the normal daily absenteeism of 10% for the same winter term.[110]

Finally, one factor which may well have brought about a real improvement in child nutrition, at least in Christchurch, was the provision of milk in schools. By 1934 around eight

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107. Health Department, 35/70.

108. Times, 22 June, 1935.

109. See below p. 339.

110. Calculated from Canterbury Education Board, Tabular Summary of Attendance, 1933.

hundred of the city's pupils were receiving half a pint of milk each day.[111] In most cases parents paid fourpence a week towards the cost, but by 1935 the Metropolitan Relief Association was providing a significant subsidy. Most of the drive behind this scheme appears to have come from teachers themselves, impressed by the deterioration in the nutrition of many of their pupils, and their vulnerability to ill-health. However, it seems unlikely that this important long-term contribution to child-health would have begun without the precipitate fall in the price of milk during the early 'thirties.[112] The provision of milk in schools might well have been even more valuable during the 'twenties, when the level of malnutrition appears to have been higher. Then the need was at least as evident, but the cost of meeting it was so much greater.

The fall in the rate of malnutrition detected amongst schoolchildren in the early 'thirties appears limited and erratic when balanced against all these influences which tended to a real or apparent improvement in its incidence. This is particularly evident when the rate between 1931 and 1935 is compared with that of 1936 and succeeding years.[113] Between 1935 and 1936 the percentage of cases reported fell by a third, and never rose to its former level again. Yet by 1936 the birthrate was rising again and five-year-olds were returning to school. Variations in the rate of malnutrition within the 1926-36 period also tended to reflect changes in economic conditions. The downward trend was

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111. Health Department, 35/70, Report by E. Baker-McLagan, 3 May, 1934.

112. Local dairymen pressed hard for the extension of this scheme. Sun, 15 March, 1934.

113. AJHR, 1939, H31, p.42.

reversed in 1929 and the rate rose again in 1931. Most significantly, there was a steady rise in the incidence of malnutrition between 1933 and 1935, despite the withdrawal of the youngest children after 1932. Inspections of these new entrants had been detecting signs of deteriorating nutrition by that time. Referring to 1932, the Director-General of Health noted in his otherwise optimistic report that "there is a group of city children which is showing some evidence of malnutrition".[114]

During the following winter Dr. Baker-McLagan carried out special surveys of the physical condition of pupils in two Christchurch schools.[115] These were Phillipstown, "a notoriously poor school", and Sydenham, situated in "an average working class area". In each case pupils were weighed and measured and their weights compared to the Health Department's scale for the average healthy child of the same age and height. However, these scales had been established in 1915, and a survey made in 1935 found that New Zealand schoolchildren were generally heavier than twenty years before. Consequently, the figures derived by Dr. Baker-McLagan tended to minimise the degree to which the children she surveyed fell below the real dominion average.

At Phillipstown the entire Standard VI, Standard II, and Primer classes were tested, a total of 332 children. Of these, 5.7% were found to be "slightly" and 1.8% "severely" underweight. This total of 7.5% was significantly higher

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114. AJHR, 1933, H31, p.5.

115. Both in Health Department, 35/70.

than the figure of 5.64% for the whole country in 1933.

In the case of Sydenham (Table 6.7), the intention was to weigh and measure the entire school. In the event of 82% of the pupils on the roll were tested. The results were recorded according to seven broad weight categories. They were also divided on the basis of whether the child's father was employed, unemployed, or deceased.

TABLE 6.7: WEIGHTS OF CHILDREN AT SYDENHAM SCHOOL, JUNE, 1933

Parental Status	Percentage deviation of weight							
	>+10%	>+7%	>+3%	normal	>-3%	>-7%	>-10%	Number
Employed	14.2	6.4	17.5	31.6	15.5	7.1	7.3	421
Unemployed	11.3	5.8	14.3	34.5	18.4	7.5	8.1	293
Widows	13.5	11.0	11.0	19.0	21.6	11.0	13.5	37
Total	13.0	6.4	16.1	32.2	17.0	7.5	8.0	751

Source: E. Baker-McLagan, "An intensive Study of Sydenham School", 7/7/33, in H35/70.

The overall total of those over ten per cent under average weight, a group which Dr. Baker-McLagan described as "malnourished", was again much higher than the national average. The rate amongst children with employed fathers was surprisingly high, possibly an indication of a large amount of short-time and casual employment. The difference between the malnutrition rate in that group and amongst those with unemployed fathers was remarkably small. It is likely that the "unemployed" was the sector most affected by deliberate absenteeism. Nevertheless, there was a significant tendency for that group to be lighter than the weight assessed as "normal" in 1915. A total of 34% were recorded as over three per cent lighter than that standard, compared with 31.4% over

three per cent heavier. The bias amongst the "employed" group was clearly the other way, with 29.9% under and 38.1% over "normal". A more up-to-date yardstick would almost certainly have shown more of the children of the unemployed to be below the average weight, and more falling into the malnourished category. The sample of children with solo mothers is rather too small to draw strong conclusions. However, the fact that almost half were recorded as underweight suggests that this group was suffering the most severely. Given the evidence of an increased rate of desertion during the depression, it seems likely that such enforced solo-motherhood contributed to the rise in malnutrition amongst schoolchildren as well as the growth in stress-related disorders amongst women.

In 1935 a private survey of five unnamed Christchurch schools by the Chairman of the Canterbury Education Board, C.S. Thompson, claimed that 8.5% of the children examined "were not getting sufficient food".[116] The method of assessment was not described, but the figure suggests that the situation had probably not improved since 1933. If a visual impression was the basis of judgment, conditions may even have worsened. Dr. Baker-McLagan had said of her Sydenham survey that "the children looked wonderfully well. I was surprised in many instances when their figures were worked out to find them below standard."

There is also some evidence of an increase in the rate of malnutrition amongst infants, those most seriously in risk

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116. Times, 22 June, 1935.

of long-term mental or physical damage. In early 1933 the Director-General of Health reported to the Unemployment Board that a number of babies born at the St. Helen's Hospitals in the four main centres had been underweight and sickly.[117] He attributed this to the malnourishment of their mothers. There were also reports from Christchurch of mothers unable to feed their infants themselves or to provide them with cow's milk. The Matron at Essex Maternity Hospital, which catered mainly for working-class patients, noticed "an increase in serious cases due to ill-nourishment on the part of mothers" at the end of 1932.[118] The local Plunket Society reported "a tendency towards malnutrition" during the same year.[119] These problems may have contributed to the reversal in the downward trend in the infant mortality rate in the city during 1932 and 1933.[120] Certainly the same number of children were admitted to Christchurch Public Hospital with malnutrition, marasmus or rickets in 1934-35 as in 1927-28, despite a twenty-five per cent fall in the birth-rate.[121] A similar but much less pronounced resurgence occurred in the national infant mortality rate between 1933 and 1935. A disproportionate amount of this increase took place in the post-neonatal age-group (one month to one year old). When economic conditions improved in 1936 and 1937, it was mortality in this age-group which improved the most. This suggests that poverty may have been rendering some mothers less able to save their children after they

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117. Health Department, 35/70.

118. Sun, 15 December, 1932.

119. Sun, 21 July, 1932.

120. CSO, Vital Statistics, 1936, p.84-85.

121. Christchurch Public Hospital, op.cit.

returned from hospital, particularly during 1935.[122]

While serious in individual cases, the increased incidence of malnutrition does not appear to have affected a great number of people. On the other hand, the Health Department's School Treatment Returns indicate that a number of other long-term health problems were worsened by the depression.[123]

The most widespread of these was the loss of teeth due to dental caries. The high sugar consumption of all classes in New Zealand had led to a tradition of rapid tooth decay. In Christchurch this was probably exacerbated by a lack of natural fluoride in the city's water supply. Where teeth were left untreated, their early loss and replacement by dentures could be expected. Not only did this involve much pain and considerable expense, but repeated toothache or a failure to replace ill-fitting or broken dentures could restrict the individual's diet or lead to serious digestive troubles, such as an ulcerated stomach. Cost was a major

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122. MacDonald et al, op.cit., mention the significance of variations in post-neonatal mortality (p.45) but the figures used in their table (p.43) bear little relation to those in CSO, Vital Statistics, 1940, p.29. The latter are correct.

There was an increase in the post-neonatal mortality rate in the late 'thirties. This was almost entirely due to an extraordinarily high figure in 1938, a year of renewed economic difficulties and continued housing problems. However, the change between the two five-year periods was more of a slight bump than a "hump" (p.45.)

1930-34	9.59	per	th.	births
1931-35	9.54	"	"	"
1935-36	9.73	"	"	"
1936-40	9.32	"	"	"

All these figures are far below those of the late 'twenties, which, for some reason, were left off the graph in MacDonald et al.

1925-29	12.46	per	th.	births
1926-30	11.85	"	"	"

123. Three of the returns have survived in Health Department, 35/34/21, those for 1932/34 inclusive, numbered 8884-6.

barrier to preventive dental treatment, and the depression clearly made many parents less able or willing to pay for it. A number of school dental clinics had been established in Christchurch schools during the 'twenties, but they were far from universally available and fees were charged. These were low by the standards of private practice but still a significant disincentive to parents on low incomes in hard times.[124] Dr. Baker-McLagan had also referred a number of children to the Christchurch Public Hospital for cheap, and occasionally free, treatment.[125] However, this practice was disliked by the hospital authorites, particularly when they were trying to economise. In 1933 they reduced staff and "tightened up on fees"[126] following a twenty per cent increase in hospital dental work during the previous year.[127] Some charitable assistance was still provided for younger children "but in the upper standards, and in the country, there is almost as little treatment for dental caries as in the old days". Unfortunately, the Christchurch School Treatment Returns do not accurately trace the resulting deterioration. Dr. Baker-McLagan confessed that "owing to the hopelessness of the situation, I do not notify nearly as many teeth as of yore". Nevertheless, there was a sharp fall in the proportion of notified dental problems actually treated.

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124. At least one school committee, that at Woolston, "tided over" local parents. A total of £45 was owed at one stage. Sun, 2 June, 1933.

125. Baker-McLagan, Stethoscope..., p.137.

126. Baker-McLagan to Paterson, Health Department, 35/34/21.

127. Sun, 9 August, 1932.

The pattern of the notifications and treatment in different Christchurch schools tended to reflect the class composition of their intakes (Table 6.8). The Normal School, situated near the centre of the city, and Woolston School, in a working-class area roughly comparable to Sydenham, had twice the rate of notifications in better-off districts such as Beckenham or Sumner. However, as economic conditions continued to deteriorate, children in the wealthier areas were less likely to receive treatment for the defects detected during school examinations. Their parents tended to be from employing, white-collar, or successful skilled working class backgrounds. Such people tended to shy away from attending the outpatient clinic at the public hospital. Even where school dental clinics existed, as at Sumner, they apparently did seek assistance to pay the comparatively low fees charged. Such attitudes probably affected the treatment of other defects. Thus in 1932 twenty-seven of the defects notified from Elmwood School, in a wealthy area, were treated by doctors and six were treated at the public hospital. These figures were almost exactly reversed in largely working-class Richmond, located very much further from the hospital.

The depression may also have increased the incidence of poor eyesight amongst those growing up in the early 'thirties. Dr. Baker-McLagan noted that the return of treatment for vision defects in 1933 was "worse than it has ever been since our work got properly organised". She attributed this to the inability of parents to pay the fifteen to thirty shillings required for spectacles. Although free testing of children's eyesight was carried out at the Christchurch Public Hospital, glasses were generally not provided by the

Charitable Aid Board. As in the case of dental defects, there was a substantial fall in the proportion of notifications, from 4.2% to 3.1% over the twenty-six Christchurch schools. Nevertheless, treatment returns fell away. At Sydenham, for example, only a fifth of vision defects notified in 1934 were treated, compared with three-quarters in 1932.

TABLE 6.8: DENTAL DEFECTS NOTIFIED AND TREATED (PERCENTAGES)

School	1932	1933	1934
Normal			
notified	33.6	53.6	33.8
treated/notified	62.7	50.0	26.3
Woolston			
notified	32.2	18.6	15.5
treated/notified	57.7	59.6	52.6
Beckenham			
notified	16.2	7.5	9.6
treated/notified	53.1	60.0	18.2
Sumner			
notified	14.0	6.7	9.9
treated/notified	80.1	28.6	25.0

Source: School Treatment Returns, H35/34/21, 8884, 8885, 8886

Finally, there was a resurgence of the endemic problem of goitre amongst Christchurch schoolchildren. This disease had been brought under control by the use of iodised salt, and Dr. Baker-McLagan attributed its renewed rise to parents economising by purchasing untreated salt. Once again, the School Treatment Returns underestimate the problem, because by 1933 the Christchurch office was only notifying cases that required more than the simple addition of iodised salt to the diet. Despite this, the proportion of children

examined at Sydenham School who showed goitre problems increased from 17.6% to 27.0% between 1932 and 1934. This was one area in which the rise in the incidence of disease showed a strong class difference, perhaps because better educated were more likely to be convinced of the advantages of iodised salt, as well as better able to pay for it. Sumner, Fendalton and Elmwood schools all showed significant decreases in the notification of goitre problems between 1932 and 1934 whereas most working class, or "mixed" schools showed substantial increases.

The severe increase in the rate of goitre was not restricted to children. In 1928-29, eighty-one patients were admitted to Christchurch Public Hospital for treatment for goitre. This figure rose rapidly to a peak of 190 in 1935.[128] Few of those involved were under sixteen years.

Neither the treatment returns nor the reports of the School Medical Officer surveyed the short-term illnesses such as colds or mild influenza amongst schoolchildren. Such an increase would seem logical if the situation described at Woolston School in the winter of 1933 applied to other working class schools: "The facts are that in these chilly days, with frequent rain and frost, about a dozen children have to attend school barefooted; others have no stockings; some have no overcoats; a few are undernourished and a few scantily-dressed".[129] The reporter also noted that many

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128. Christchurch Public Hospital, op.cit. See also the remarkable statement by "a doctor" that there had been no increase in the incidence of goitre. Sun, 30 November, 1933.

129. Sun, 2 June, 1933.

children were wearing sandshoes or sandals, and that others had holes in their shoes. However, the attendance figures collected by the Canterbury Education Board can serve as a rough guide,[130] although other factors would have influenced them besides ill-health. Some older chilren would have missed school to do casual work in order to supplement the family income, or to assist their over-wrought or working mothers. Others were kept at home because their parents could not afford adequate clothing or class-room materials for them. Conversely, the exclusion of five-year-olds after 1932 would have tended to improve the figures, as the youngest children were amongst the most likely to be absent from school. Nevertheless the effect of the depression does show through the attendance statistics. There was a marked fall in attendance during the winter term of 1932, particularly in working class schools. It was also noticeable that the winter of 1934 witnessed a greater rise in absenteeism than the much harsher winter of 1930.

Other age-groups appear to have been similarly affected. Social workers frequently mentioned the prevalence of less serious illnesses. They were often blamed on the lack of good food, or insufficient clothing - in particular, the wearing of the cheap sandshoes which had become part of the uniform of unemployment.[131] There were also claims that malnutrition was slowing recovery of normally mild cases[132] and that it was bringing complications.[133] Most of this sickness was not serious enough to affect mortality or

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130. Canterbury Education Board, op.cit.

131. Sun, 23 September, 1933, 21 April, 1934.

132. Sun, 9 June, 1934.

133. Sun, 21 July, 1932.

hospital statistics, but it was certainly part of the misery the depression brought for large sections of the city's population.

Finally, changes in patterns of work due to the depression led to a wide range of health problems. The requirement of manual labour in return for unemployment pay was a clear instance. The placing of men from non-manual backgrounds onto labouring jobs undoubtedly led to many injuries, such as strains and sprains. This was especially likely where individuals from white-collar jobs were driven by their "work ethics" or shame at being unemployed. Such problems would have lessened as the survivors hardened up or adopted the labourers' "ca' canny" approach to such poorly supervised and lowly paid work. Men who remained in town on No.5 Scheme jobs had greater opportunity to adapt than those who went out to the more closely supervised Public Works Department projects or No.4 Scheme farmwork. Even so, not all No.5 jobs were adjusted to the generally limited physical capabilities, restricted diet, low morale and poor clothing of most relief workers. In 1934 one of Dr. McLagan's assistants commented that as late as the previous winter "many of the men in Christchurch [were] working in the open in bitter weather with inadequate clothing".[134] The Unemployment Board's decision to allow the postponement of work on wet days was a belated recognition of the situation of the average relief worker. However, a vindictive or unduly conscientious

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134. Shaw to Paterson, 18 April, 1934, Health Department, 54/49/18. c.f. "...some of the enforced changes in living conditions (e.g. a change to outdoor work) may have resulted in improved health". NZYB, 1936, p.119.

supervisor could still threaten the health of the unemployed. One of the major complaints of the workers on the Rapaki section of the Summit Road in 1934 was that their supervisor required them to walk up to the job itself before dismissing them during bad weather.[135]

The same works had earlier witnessed some particularly serious examples of the hazards of giving unemployed men jobs to which they were unaccustomed. In 1929, the New Zealand Workers' Union drew attention to the deaths of eight men in eight months resulting from the handling of explosives by inexperienced relief workers,[136] on road construction. This was said to have been more than in the previous four or five years. At least two of these deaths had occurred on the Summit Road. Problems were also noted on local body relief works, with some of the unemployed lacking both the nourishment and the skills for heavy manual labour. Many were "more used to the pen than the shovel", according to the Curator of the Botanical Gardens, who had to supervise large numbers of relief workers.[137] The widow of one such worker claimed that his fatal heart-attack had been brought on by the strain of heavy labour.[138] Certainly the Christchurch City Council found relief workers to be rather expensively accident-prone.[139]

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135. Sun, 21 June, 1934.

136. Times, 6 December, 1929. Also similar incidents in Times, 6 June, 1931, and Press, 27 August, 1936.

137. Sun, 25 May, 1931.

138. Sun, 27 July, 1932. A similar case was reported in the Press, 9 September, 1929.

139. Christchurch City Council, Minutes, 11 June, 1928, 15 June, 1931; Outward Correspondence, City Treasurer to Chairman of Works Committee, 12 April, 1933.

TABLE 6.9: INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENTS PER HUNDRED THOUSAND MAN-HOURS WORKED, 1925-38[140]

	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938
Public Works Department	4.036	4.600	5.098	6.313	7.461	7.680	8.641	6.562	5.337	5.384	5.370	8.227	7.694	6.672
Railways	4.900	4.665	4.624	4.622	5.155	5.585	3.908	3.482	4.107	4.056	4.420	4.755	5.573	5.911
Post and Telegraph Department	1.316	1.140	1.596	1.138	1.168	1.385	0.881	0.877	0.953	1.194	1.132	1.336	1.343	1.789
Factories	1.213	1.530	1.582	1.473	1.523	1.402	1.348	1.613	1.840	1.306	1.402	1.694	2.027	2.044
including Meatworks	12.500	17.208	17.257	18.480	15.132	14.684	8.227	18.346	19.261	14.127	14.822	16.517	18.536	17.484
Grand Total	1.821	2.114	2.262	2.213	2.503	2.557	2.378	2.195	2.391	2.111	2.373	2.683	3.050	3.108

Source: CSO, Prices, Wages etc., 1925-38, "Frequency Rates and Compensation by Industrial Groups".

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140. There is almost certainly something wrong with the official figure for the accident rate in meatworks in 1931. The number of accidents recorded had actually increased slightly on 1930 but this was offset by an enormous increase in the number of hours worked. The latter figure was given as 166 million, compared with 92 million in 1930 and 1932, and 102 million in 1933. CSO, Prices, wages, etc., 1930, p.60; 1931, p.24; 1932, p.25; 1933, p.24.

Official figures on industrial accidents throughout New Zealand (Table 6.9) do not seem to support any suggestion that many more mishaps occurred during the early 'thirties because of "sweating" or the neglect of safety precautions by employers. Nevertheless, the depression does seem to have had some detrimental influences. For example, the effect of relief work shows up in the Public Works Department's statistics. From 1925 onwards there was a steady increase in the number of accidents per hundred thousand man-hours worked as more and more relief workers were taken on. The peak reached in 1931 was more than double the level of 1925 and matched the peak in employment on public works. When large numbers of men untrained or unused to the work were taken on in 1936, the rate of accidents soared again. Some increase was to be expected as pressure of work grew and there were more workers to get in each other's way. However, many of these casualties might have been avoided if the depression and government responses to it had not forced often unsuitable men into hazardous work in large numbers and with little training. A similar trend was noticeable as numbers built up rapidly again on the railways, in factories and in the Post and Telegraph Department. Finally, there was a significant increase in the accident rate in factories in 1932 and 1933. This was almost wholly due to a dramatic rise in the frequency of accidents in the meat-processing industry as untrained men were drafted in to break the freezing-workers strike and permit a reduction in wages.[141]

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141. See p.149.

Did the ill-wind of depression blow anyone's health any good? There was the widespread, vaguely puritanical belief that it benefitted most those it struck hardest. Eminent professionals were not alone in suggesting that the economic crisis had improved patterns of consumption. In an editorial in 1932 the Star claimed that "the effects of a restricted diet seems to contribute to an improvement in general health through more intelligent eating forced on people by economic considerations".[142] Its main competitor took a similar line.[143] However, a depression does not in itself enforce "more intelligent" eating habits. On the contrary, "unwholesome", comparatively expensive foods are often an important source of consolation and colour to those suffering from economic and social stress:

> A millionaire may enjoy breakfasting off orange juice and Ryvita biscuits; an unemployed man doesn't...When you are unemployed, which is to say when you are underfed, harassed, bored, and miserable, you don't want to eat dull wholesome food. You want something a little bit 'tasty'. There is always some cheaply pleasant thing to tempt you. Let's have three pennorth of chips! Run out and buy us a twopenny ice-cream! Put the kettle on and we'll all have a nice cup of tea!...A cup of tea or even an asprin is much better as a temporary stimulant than a crust of brown bread.[144]

While smoking cigarettes on ten bob a week might seem hopeless extravagance to those in comfortable employment, many unemployed treasured its soothing effect. "It gets on your nerves, this knocking around with nothing to do, and that's just the time a man wants a smoke".[145]

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142. Star, 4 November, 1932.

143. Sun, 22 September, 1933.

144. G. Orwell (E. Blair), The Road to Wigan Pier, Harmondsworth, 1972, p.86.

145. Sun, 17 November, 1930.

Nor is it immediately apparent that, say, stale bread distributed free is healthier than a fresh, bought loaf. Indeed, less expensive food may well be less wholesome. Cheaper meat, for example, tends to be much fattier than dearer cuts, and it is considerably more difficult to cook properly. Starchy foods likewise tend to be cheaper than fresh vegetables or lean meat. An assistant to Dr. Baker-McLagan noted in 1933 that "some of the women...are getting over-fat from an excess of carbohydrates in the diet".[146] Eviction or the threat of foreclosure probably discouraged the home production of food - a major source of fresh vegetables in Christchurch working-class homes. The effect would have been strongest amongst the poorest people, those who came to rely on a "moonlight flit" to meet the rent. Backyard poultry-keeping, which had been a feature of Christchurch households in 1926,[147] was severely curtailed by such insecurity and the need to pay for feed-grains.

The official estimates of consumption per capita give little support to the theory of healthier eating by the general population during the depression.[148] Changing buying patterns tended to reflect comparative price-movements, and these were not always in the direction of healthier eating. For example, butter prices were steadily depressed between 1924 and 1935 by ever-increasing dominion production and ever-falling London prices. As a result butter consumption showed

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146. Shaw to Paterson, 18 April, 1934, Health Department, 54/49/18.

147. In 1926 over forty per cent of households in Christchurch City kept poultry; in 1936 only thirty per cent. CSO, Census, 1926, Vol.XVI, p.12-13; 1936, Appendix A, p.4-5.

148. A three-year moving average of "Amounts Available for Home Use, per capita" were kept two years in arrears by NZYB, 1926-36.

no falling tendency during the early 'thirties, despite having increased by a third during the late 'twenties. The fruit market experienced a similar phenomenon. Local purchases of apples fell considerably between 1925 and 1935, as orchardists turned to supplying the higher-priced export market. This was partially off-set by increased consumption of fruits richer in vitamins - oranges, lemons, and bananas. With rapidly rising local citrus production and a world market glutted with exotic fruit, the average New Zealand consumer was able to buy far more of them than in the prosperous 1923-25 period. Of course most of the unemployed still could not have afforded oranges or bananas very often in preference to apples.

The long-term decline in purchases of cereals and potatoes accelerated greatly in the late 'twenties. This was particularly so in the case of flour, whose price was increased by protective duties. These declines continued, albeit at a slower rate, during the early 'thirties. On a carcass-weight basis, total local consumption of meat declined by about a quarter between the two periods 1923-25 and 1932-34. However, little of this decrease occurred during the early 'thirties, and a large part of it seems to have been related to a simultaneous switch from beef to sheep-meats. Beef contains a much higher proportionate weight of bone than mutton or lamb. Moreover, it seems likely that more of the fat was consumed during the later period. Conversely per capita eating of fresh fish, a much less fatty form of protein, established a significantly lower level during the depression. Cheese consumption, already negligible, declined by about a third in the early

TABLE 6.10: ALCOHOL-RELATED DISORDERS

	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937
Alcoholism:															
Christchurch Public Hospital						11	25	27	24	9	7	11	12	19	27
Sunnyside Hospital	6	5	9	10	7	8	8	15	7	11	9	8	6	5	
New Zealand Hospitals				396	321	338	382	364	260	211	193	199	249	361	411
New Zealand Mental Hospitals	40	50	50	42	50	41	48	55	29	33	25	26	17	23	45
Cirrhosis of the Liver:															
New Zealand Hospitals				51	47	52	54	39	36	45	46	38	40	45	35

Sources: Christchurch Public Hospital, Patients Treated, 1928-37; CSO, Vital Statistics, 1923-37, "Diseases Treated in Public Hospitals"; AJHR, 1924-38, H7, "Principal Assigned Causes of Insanity".

'thirties. At 104 lb. per head, sales of refined sugar were significantly higher in the 1932-24 period than in 1926-28, when they stood at an average of 92 lb. Other 'special' or 'tasty' foods showing little or no decrease in consumption included tea, vinegar, and confectionery.[149]

The consumption of tobacco, an area with strong implications for health, showed little change. Between 1923 and 1925 the average annual consumption per capita was 3.13 lb., compared with 3.66 lb. between 1926 and 1928, and 3.5 lb. between 1932 and 1934. Even the marginal benefit to health represented by this small decrease may well have been offset by changing habits brought by economic stress. It seems likely that the tar-filled tobacco in butts was more likely to be smoked for longer or recycled by the smoker. Cheaper, stronger blends, high in tar, made both the smoker's money and his sparse roll-your-own go further. Above all, those down on their luck would have savoured each valuable cigarette to the full, drawing each puff of smoke down into the lungs rather than carelessly allowing it to drift away.

However, the depression did bring substantial improvements in two areas of public health. These were the overlapping problems of alcohol-related diseases and motor vehicle accidents. In each case the improvement was directly traceable to the economic crisis itself.

The per capita consumption of alcohol dropped significantly during the early 'thirties. That of ale and beer fell from 9.81 gallons between 1923 and 1925 to 9.47 gallons between 1926 and 1928. It then plummetted to six gallons between

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149. Usage of salt also increased but most of the fifty pounds per capita would have been used in export freezing works.

1932 and 1934. Consumption of spirits dropped even more dramatically, from .54 gallons to .51 gallons and then .2 gallons. Relative cost was again influential. Heavy increases in customs duties on imported wines and spirits, and rises in beer tax were used by the United and Coalition Governments to attempt to balance their budgets. The resulting increases in the real price of alcohol reinforced the widespread fall in incomes in cutting purchases of commercial alcoholic beverages. Aspiring home brewers undoubtedly made up some of this reduction, at least in the short-term.[150] But the art of brewing requires sufficient application and luck to deter a large proportion of confident novices. Existing devotees may have stepped up production to some extent, but the fall in the consumption of hops within New Zealand suggests that there was no vast new subterranean lake of beer.[151] Distilling was even more expensive and difficult than brewing, and it carried legal risks as well. Some acoholics did turn more to methylated spirits and other industrial products, sometimes with fatal results.[152] But the ordinary drinker appears to have cut his intake rather than take such risks. Consequently the total numbers of admissions to public and mental hospitals

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150. Local grocery shops experienced a substantial increase in sales of hops, malt, yeast, and finings during 1931. Sun, 20 July, 1931.

151. In 1932-33 there were 355 acres of hops planted in New Zealand, compared with 649 acres in 1927-28. NZYB, 1929, p.373; 1936, p.338. Imports in 1933 were 721 pounds, compared with over a thousand pounds in 1929. CSO, Trade and Shipping, 1929, 1933.

152. Sun, 3 September, 1931, 13 January, 1933. The Salvation Army reported an increase in such cases, including "far more younger men". Numbers were said to be in the vicinity of twelve to twenty. Meths cost 1/11 a quart and was customarily consumed in Hagley Park, the city's traditional open-air dormitory for the down-and-out. Sun, 19 November, 1931.

on the grounds of alcoholism dropped sharply after 1930 (Table 6.10). In fact, the public hospital figures show a nearly perfect correlation with the trend of economic conditions between 1926 and 1936. They reached their nadir in 1933, at half the level of 1929. Thereafter they rose again, particularly when the benefits of recovery were spread more widely in 1936 and 1937. The incidence of cirrhosis of the liver, a much more long-term effect of alcohol abuse, also appears to have been affected by the depression. Admissions to public hospitals for the treatment of this disease reached a peak in 1929. By 1937 admissions were down by over a third. Whatever other damage the economic crisis was doing, it was not driving more people to drink, in the short-term at least.

The decline in deaths due to motor accidents during the depression was almost as dramatic as admissions to hospital due to alcohol abuse. Between 1923 and 1930 the national mortality directly involving motor cars had increased from 48 to 200 per annum.[153] It then dropped sharply, reaching a low-point of 130 in 1933. It is likely that there was a roughly commensurate decrease in injuries due to motor-vehicle accidents. With the gradual return of prosperity, and rising motor-vehicle registrations, the casualty rate mounted again. By 1936 the death toll had returned to 217. Department of Transport statistics on fatal accidents involving motor vehicles suggested that decreased alcohol consumption had contributed significantly to the fall in deaths.[154]

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153. CSO, Vital Statistics, 1926-38, "Death by Causes".

154. AJHR, 1937, H40, p.40, Table No.14.

Methods of assessing impairment due to alcohol were primitive and unsystematic.[155] Nevertheless, "mild" or "severe" intoxication was considered a factor in roughly 13% of accidents in 1931, only 6% in 1933, and 16% in 1937. Overall, it can be argued that the depression saved the lives of more than two hudnred potential victims of the new technology. Methods of braking, suspension and steering, passenger protection, traffic control, law enforcement, and roadmaking were clearly lagging behind the power and popularity of the motor vehicle. The economic crisis helped to reduce the carnage while some improvements emerged in these fields.

Slightly counter-balancing this is the possibility that cuts in public and private expenditure may have slowed the adoption of some of these innovations. In partiuclar, some motorists continued to drive unsafe cars which they could not afford to repair or replace. A check on motor car brakes by the Christchurch City Council inspectors during October, 1932, revealed "very serious" deficiencies.[156]

Aside from the significant exceptions of alcohol-related diseases and road deaths, there is overwhelming evidence that the depression harmed public health. This harm was often masked by the improvements wrought by factors such as weather patterns, changing technology, a falling birth-rate, and the decline in the health effects of the Great War.

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155. On the basis of studies in Britain and the United States the Department of Transport concluded that "there is every probability that sub-intoxication was present in a much larger percentage of the cases in New Zealand than is stated in the statistics". Ibid, 1936, p.37.

156. Sun, 15 October, 1934.

It was nonetheless real, and particularly striking in the areas of mental health and child development. On the one hand, the reality and the fear of poverty and lost status spawned a substantial increase in stress-related disorders, notably suicide, mental illness, and ulcers. On the other hand, decreased incomes reduced the ability of many parents to provide proper food and preventive medical treatment for their children. As a consequence large sections of New Zealand's population were denied the better health that new technology had made possible and which would soon be taken for granted.

CHAPTER SEVEN

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS: THE CHRISTCHURCH CITY COUNCIL

New technology and the depression both greatly increased the work of local government between the wars. On the one hand, local authorities were responsible for a number of areas profoundly affected by technological change: the distribution of electricity to consumers, the repair of roads, the construction of new suburban streets, the control of traffic, town-planning, and the provision of water supply, sewerage and harbour facilities. On the other hand, the allocation of official assistance to the destitute was still primarily a local responsibility. Regional hospital boards were charged with providing charitable aid to the unemployed, deserted families and those incapable of earning their keep due to sickness or old age. These were groups whose dependence tended to increase with the depression. Other local bodies had also traditionally provided social welfare assistance during times of economic crisis in the form of relief work to the unemployed. Despite some protests that unemployment relief should be the sole responsibility of central government, local authorities again assumed the major role in providing special works during the late 'twenties, albeit with substantial and increasing financial support from Wellington. More generally, local authorities were major employers, especially in the "multiplier" field

of public works. They were empowered to recycle money in the community both through taxation on property, and borrowing. In many cases they also had funds accruing from profitable trading enterprises which could be used in providing work and promoting economic activity.

However, the policies followed by local government were subject to popular approval at elections which were arguably more democratic than those for the House of Representatives. Locally, as nationally, there was universal adult suffrage, with both residents and ratepayers permitted to vote. But local authority elections were held every two years up to 1935 rather than every three as with general elections. Furthermore, there was no equivalent of the country quota in the election of a major territorial local authority like the Christchurch City Council. Plural voting was permitted, with nominees of companies owning property being empowered to vote on their behalf - the so-called "bricks and mortar franchise". But such votes accounted for only a small proportion of the total cast, even in the fiercely contested municipal election of 1935.[1] No city council result was decided by them during this period. On the other hand, the determination of certain labour councillors to see the wishes of the voter more accurately reflected led to the use of a preferential voting system in the three city council elections between 1929 and 1933. Voting by crosses beside candidates'

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1. Only about five hundred of the forty thousand votes cast in the 1935 election were plural votes, some of them almost certainly from trade unions. Christchurch City Council, Outward Correspondence, 10 April, 14, 24 May, 1935. In 1927 it was estimated that there were only three or four hundred plural qualifications. Times, 29 March, 1927. For details of non-residential qualifications, Press, 11 March, 1930.

names, rather than the potentially confusing national system of crossing out those not wanted, also enhanced local democracy in Christchurch in 1935.[2] Above all, local elections in Christchurch in the 'twenties and 'thirties excited similar interest to national contests, with vast crowds of spectators blocking city streets to a late hour, often in pouring rain, to watch the posting of results outside the Town Hall. Here were regular and reasonably accurate tests of the popularity of policies adopted locally to meet, or to neglect, the problems created by technological change and economic crisis. Local election results can thus be seen as an indication of popular priorities during the depression, particularly the extent to which people were prepared to see resources transferred from themselves and from other areas of local body activity to the assistance of the less fortunate.

The significance of local government politics in Christchurch between the wars was enhanced by the fact that the Labour Party dominated the city council for most of the period beween 1927 and 1935. Some of the foremost leaders of the New Zealand party headed the local council. Consequently the city provides something of a case-study of Labour

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2. The 1925 Municipal election used voting by crosses on a "first-past-the-post" basis. Two per cent of the vote was informal. In 1927 the "strike-out" system was used on the same basis and there was a 17.7% informal vote. The three preferential voting elections (1929, 1931, and 1933) required voters to number their chosen candidates, but informality remained relatively low at an average of 4.8%. The 1935 election saw a return to the first-past-the-post and crosses - and an informal vote of only 1.65%, the lowest of the post-war period. Ibid., 31 May, 1935. Dunedin City Council had a similar experience during this period, with "strike-outs" leading to informal votes as high as 19.2% and crosses to a rate as low as 1.81%. K. McDonald, The City of Dunedin: A Century of Civic Enterprise, Dunedin, 1965, p.341-43.

leadership "in office" during the depression. Understandably, it has been inferred that Christchurch's reputed peacefulness during the depression was at least partly due to the city council following more enlightened policies than those adopted in municipalities controlled by conservative councils:

> Throughout most of the depression Christchurch had led the cities in their efforts to provide for the unemployed, raising numerous loans, proposing large public works programmes, and subsidising its relief workers' wages since 1931.[3]

The decision not to cut the wages of permanent council employees has also been mentioned in this context.[4] Overall, the impression is one of a Labour council using its authority to promote activity and to "restore the purchasing power" of as many unemployed as possible.

In common with the other main centres, the Christchurch Urban Area contained a patchwork of territorial and ad hoc local authorities.[5] The city itself was predominant, embracing over eighty per cent of the population. Three independent boroughs remained on the fringes of the city; comparatively wealthy Riccarton in the west and Sumner in the south-west, and relatively poor New Brighton in the east. Much of the extreme north and south of the built-up area, including the

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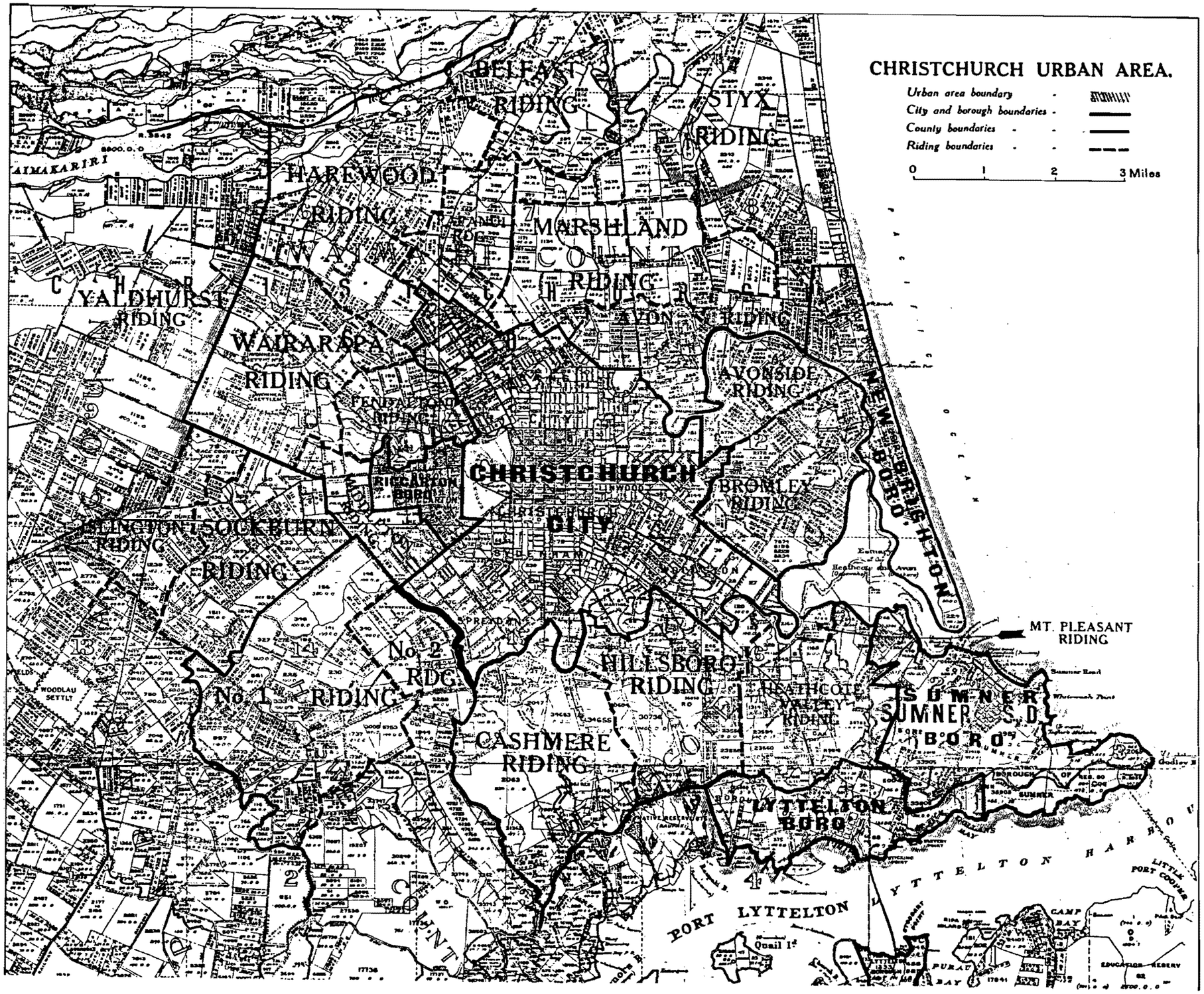
3. R. Robertson, The Tyranny of Circumstances: Responses to Unemployment in New Zealand, 1929-35, unpublished Ph. D. thesis, Otago University, 1978, p.200. See also W. Scotter, A History of Canterbury, Vol.3: 1876-1950, Christchurch, 1965, p.380; B. Roth and J. Hammond, Toil and Trouble, Wellington, 1981, p.126; and P. Oakley, The Handling of Depression Problems in Christchurch, 1928-35. A Social Study, unpublished M.A. thesis, Canterbury University, 1953.

4. R. Noonan, The Riots of 1932: A Study of Social Unrest in Auckland, Wellington and Dunedin, unpublished M.A. thesis, Auckland University, 1969, p.154; Oakley, op.cit.

5. See map p. 365.


CHRISTCHURCH URBAN AREA.
Urban area boundary
City and borough boundaries
County boundaries
Riding boundaries
0 1 2 3 Miles
BELFAST RIDING
STYX RIDING
HAREWOOD RIDING
MARSHLAND RIDING
AVON RIDING
AVONSIDE RIDING
YALDHURST RIDING
WAIRARAPA RIDING
FENDALTON RIDING
CHRISTCHURCH CITY
BROMLEY RIDING
NEW BRIGHTON BORO
SPRINGS RD
PAPANUI ROAD
RICCARTON ROAD
ILLINGTON-SOCKBURN RIDING
No. 2 RDG.
No. 1 RIDING
HILLSBORO RIDING
HEATHCOTE VALLEY RIDING
CASHMERE RIDING
MT. PLEASANT RIDING
SUMNER S.D.
SUMNER BORO
LYTTELTON BORO
LYTTELTON HARBOUR
PORT LYTTELTON
LITTLE PORT COOPER
CAMP BAY
PURAU BAY
Quail Is
WOODLAU SETTLT
AIMAKARIRI

very wealthy suburbs of Fendalton and Cashmere, also lay outside the city in the counties of Waimairi and Heathcote. These Counties met in the east to cut Christchurch off from New Brighton. Drainage and tramways were provided by boards elected from throughout the urban area, but dominated by city representatives. Beyond these, there were regional authorities in the form of the North Canterbury Hospital Board, the Lyttelton Harbour Board and the Waimakariri River Trust. City members controlled less than half the seats on these bodies despite the fact that Christchurch contained around two-thirds of the area's population - effectively a sort of country quota. Finally, there were a few authorities with members seconded from territorial local bodies. These included the Christchurch Fire Board and a Domains Board, concerned principally with Hagley Park.

In 1926 Christchurch City had the lowest rates and by far the lowest debt burden of the four main cities. The rate per thousand pound of rateable capital value was £10.26, compared with £12.15 in Auckland, £11.18 in Wellingtin, and £11.64 in Dunedin.[6] Even when the liabilities of the Drainage Board and the Tramways Board are taken into account, Christchurch's debt amounted to only £2.4 million, compared with totals of £6.2 million, £4.6 million, and £3.0 million in Auckland, Wellington and Dunedin respectively.[7] There were a number of reasons for this happy situation. Firstly, the city was built largely on flat land and was located near to good

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6. CSO, Local Authorities Handbook, 1927, p.210-11.

7. Ibid., p.191, 334.

sources of road metal and shingle. Consequently there was little damage to roadways from rushing stormwater and surfaces could be made and remade at lower cost. Secondly, many of the city's facilities had been established in a burst of progressive activity just after the turn of the century. This had enabled the city to pay for them at interest rates set before wartime inflation but with money devalued by that inflation. Finally, the city council had been controlled since 1911 by a very conservative Citizens' and Ratepayers' Association, strongly influenced by larger business interests and anxious to keep the rates as low as possible.

By the mid-'twenties, however, this conservative policy was proving inadequate to meet the problems and the demands created by new technology. In particular, the development of motor transport was having a disastrous impact on existing road surfaces. The problem was compounded by the need to dig up roads in order to install the many new services that electrical technology and improved standards of living had made possible. These included electrical supply cables, telephone conduits, water pipes, sewers and gas mains. In the face of this combined assault, the council's policy of patching up the roads by existing methods proved totally inadequate. Yet in 1923-24 the Works Committee vote was actually cut.[8] Wet winters in 1925 and 1926 combined with an extraordinary growth in traffic completely destroyed the macadamised surfaces of several arterial roads.

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8. Press, 19 July, 1926.

All four Christchurch newspapers called for urgent and large-scale measures to meet the crisis. In July, 1926, the Press, the staunchest supporter of the Citizens' Association, sent a reporter on a twenty-mile tour of the city to inspect the quality of the roading.[9] He described some streets as "well-nigh impassable to motor traffic", others as "mud tracks", and others again as too risky for even "the most enthusiastic motorist". Earlier in the year, the Sun had pointed out the effects of "local body parsimony and neglect" in the state of the city's roadways, claiming that other local bodies were maintaining their stretches of arterial road at a much higher standard.[10] It hinted at some class bias in roadworks, with Park Terrace and Woodham Road well-maintained but Ferry Road and the eastern extensions of central streets badly deteriorated. The Star evoked the memory of the local patron saint of municipal progress, Thomas Edward Taylor, mentioning a plan of his in 1910 to reconstruct the city's roads.[11] Here was an issue on which both the wealthy and the humble could be discontented. Both had to use the roads. The working class cyclist risked injury in potholes and deep mud while the fact that his motor car was damaging the road did nothing to allay the motorist's concern at the damage the road was doing to his motor car.

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9. Ibid.

10. Sun, 2 February, 1926.

11. Star, 27 April, 1926. Later this newspaper contrasted Christchurch's roads with Auckland's, claiming that here there was "not a decent half-mile of road in the city". Star, 23 June, 1926. Also Star, 15, 16, 20 July, 1926, and Times, 20 July, 1926.

New forms of traffic control were also needed. Revision of bylaws cost little but meant little until the city could provide motorised inspectors to enforce them. A report to the council at the beginning of 1926 recommended the employment of officers on motor-cycles.[12] This was strongly supported by one newspaper, which inveighed against

> the motor-cyclist with the sleep-disturbing cut-out, the motorist with glaring headlights flashing in all directions but on the road in front of him, the jovial and noisy dance party, disturbing quiet localities in the small hours of the morning, and the lightless cyclist, who is largely responsible for the use of glaring headlights...but above all the speeding motorist must be eliminated. The startling growth of street accidents demands that the strictest repressive measures should be directed against all those who show the slightest disregard for safety rules.[13]

Even a community so recently exposed to wartime casualty lists found it difficult to accept the almost daily reports of serious injury and death on its roads. Runaway horses had never caused problems on such a scale. Once again, this was an issue which served to unite different sections of the population. Pedestrians and cyclists tended to regard all motorists as requiring greater control. The majority of motorists returned the feeling while criticising many of their fellow drivers.

The expansion in private motoring contributed greatly to a massive growth in the consumption of oil-fuels during the 'twenties. Between 1923 and 1928 the quantity of fuel oil landed at Lyttelton increased from 19,000 tons to 36,000 tons.[14] This posed town-planning problems as

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12. Star, 16 March, 1926.

13. Star, 12 May, 1926.

14. CSO, Trade and Shipping, 1923, 1928, "Shipping by Ports".

companies sought permission to construct new oil-stores, and caused considerable disquiet in some of the older working-class suburbs. These districts had generally tolerated the coal-yards, and even the gasworks, along the railway line. But the prospect of having large quantities of highly explosive fuel nearby upset the locals, particularly as very few of them saw any benefit to themselves in the new fuel. The motor car was still regarded as the plaything of the rich and better-off white-collar workers,[15] whereas coal and gas had been used in working-class homes. The proposal which excited the most opposition was that of the Vacuum Oil Company to construct underground tanks with a combined capacity of 80,000 gallons at the corner of Hazeldean and Park Roads at Addington.[16] Despite vigorous opposition from the Labour Party, with some support from Citizens' councillors, a permit was issued.

The spread of electrical technology was also creating new demands. The increase in consumption threatened a power shortage, which many citizens believed could be best overcome by the construction of the city's own power station at Otarama on the Waimakariri.[17] At the same time, the wiring of most city households for electric light and the advent of cheaper electric stoves led to pressure for lower domestic electricity prices.[18]

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15. Press, 22 September, 1926.

16. Press, 3 August, 28 September, 9 November, 7 December, 1926, 1 March, 5 May, 1927, Times, 30 November, 1926, 13 April, 1927. Also later debate over petrol tanks on the corner of Hutcheson and Colombo Streets - "Let us, as a Labour Council, see justice done to the small man" (Councillor C.Carr). Press, 27 September, 1927.

17. Star, 6,7,31 May, 1926; Press, 5,11 August, 1926.

18. Press, 20 July, 1926.

Another, less publicised, promise by Labour concerned the construction of a "ladies rest-rooms' in the centre of the city.[19] The development of the tramways, picture-houses and large retail stores selling mass-produced consumer goods had drawn increasing numbers of suburban housewives into "town". While this fostered the growth of tea-houses and restaurants it also led to a pressing need for some more extensive and salubrious facilities than the existing underground lavatories in Cathedral Square.

An assortment of other problems still faced the city council as a result of the demographic pressures created by the Great War. The post-war boom in marriages and births had greatly increased demands for housing, educational facilities, playgrounds and "rest-rooms". Local politicians were sometimes expected and sometimes tempted to try to meet these demands.

From its inception as the Independent Political Labour League in 1905, the Labour Party in Christchurch had advocated greater activity on the part of municipal authorities in order to improve life in the city.[20] From the time that they first gained independent representation on the council in 1911, Labour councillors had been instrumental in extending the scope of its work, often winning over a minority of their opponents to approve the change. Examples of such innovations included an independent insurance scheme for the council's workers, a system of housing loans to prospective

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19. Times, 13 April, 1926, Press, 5 May, 1927.

20. Political Labour League of New Zealand, Canterbury District, Manifesto, March, 1905, Howard Papers 980/192.

homeowners and the provision of additional public reserves.[21]

In its campaign for the 1927 municipal election, the Labour Party took advantage of dissatisfaction with the council's relative inactivity on a number of the new problems. Labour councillors were vigorous in their support for a roading scheme for the whole city, and were prepared to contemplate a large loan to finance it.[22] As in previous campaigns, the need for further municipal enterprises was emphasised. Improvements to the existing private system of milk distribution, dominated by the "can and dipper", was given a high priority.[23] Some Labour candidates advocated a municipally controlled supply from a centralised pasteurisation plant. Other suggestions included a municipal produce market, municipal fish market, more loans for housebuilding, cheaper home appliances from an expanded MED trading department, and a consolidation of the council's insurance policies - to be lodged with the State Insurance Office.[24] Many of these policies were not new, but they did confirm Labour's image as the party of change versus the cramped conservatism of their opponents.

Yet the Labour Party's newspaper advertising also attacked its opponents for adding to the rates; "every increase in rates hurts the workers. The Citizens' Association majority have been responsible for every increase

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21. H.T. Armstrong praised the workers' insurance scheme in parliament and attributed it to Hiram Hunter, NZPD, Vol.209, p.913-14, July 21, 1926. On housing, see Press, 30 March, 1926. On playgrounds, Press, 16 February, 1926.

22. Sun, 8 June, 1926.

23. Sun, 13 April, 1927; Times, 16, 21 April, 1927; Press, 27 April, 1927.

24. Times, 23, 26 April, 1927.

in rates. Labour, if given a majority, will examine the whole position and reduce rates, if possible".[25] Such claims were not necessarily cynical. As with so many other economic miracles, the key to increased spending with decreased taxation was to be borrowing. It was hoped that the resulting debt could be serviced from consequent savings or from charges on the use of the new facilities.

This combination of municipal activity and concern for the rates was in part a reflection of Labour's dual constituency in the city. The solid core of the party's support lay with the twelve hundred or so employees of local government in Christchurch and their families. To them Labour control promised not only increased job opportunities but the heady prospect of labour representatives negotiating their pay and conditions from both sides of the table. Trade unions containing significant numbers of local body employees - the General Labourers' Union, the Tramway Employees' Union, and the Drivers' Union, provided a disproportionate share of the North Canterbury Labour Representation Committee's (LRC) funds[26] and candidates. In 1927, for example, at least six of the sixteen Labour candidates for the city council had been on the executives of these unions at some time. Two of the city's four Labour M.P.'s, Hubert Thomas Armstrong (Christchurch East) and Edwin John Howard (Christchurch South) had been officials of the TEU and the

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25. Times, 16 April, 1927.

26. In the March year 1930-31 the TEU alone provided 23% of the LRC's income. Figures calculated from North Canterbury Labour Representation Committee, Receipt Book, 1929-36.

GLU respectively. They had also served as city councillors and on other local bodies. But the prospect of Labour as employer attracted more than the existing local body employees and their families. Local government provided permanent work at award rates and with good conditions, organised from a small number of depots and therefore readily subject to union supervision. Employment by private contractors and landowners, on the other hand, tended to be casual, underpaid and not readily organised or inspected by union officials. "Socialism", viewed as the extension of local government working conditions to every job, had an obvious appeal to all unskilled workers who wished to attain the incomes and security of their skilled counterparts.

A high proportion of the unskilled working class rented their accommodation and it is significant that the local Independent Political Labour League first won representation on the council during 1911, in the election following the extension of the franchise to residents as well as ratepayers. Thereafter Labour had controlled roughly a third of the council seats.[27] However, unskilled workers tended to be very mobile and were often not in the same rented accommodation for two elections running. It was therefore essential to Labour's chances of winning control of the council that it motivate these workers, arrange their enrolment and ensure that they got out to vote. As a result of the downturn of 1926, many of the unskilled were facing unemployment, a condition which in itself increased the attraction of a Labour council with its emphasis on greater

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27. Times, 28 April, 1927.

activity by local government. However, the Labour members on the council had also been very active in publicising the plight of the unemployed and had achieved something practical for them. As well as getting a £2000 subsidy for the relief works organised by the Christchurch Unemployment Committee, the party's councillors had managed to win over enough Citizens' councillors to approve a special £5000 unemployment loan for roadworks in Barbadoes Street.[28] Finally, under Sullivan's direction Labour's customary drive to get its supporters on the roll was an outstanding success in 1927[29] and the vote increased disproportionately in labouring areas.[30]

In order to achieve a council majority, however, the party had to continue to win a large section of the skilled and white collar vote. Such workers were much more likely to be ratepayers and therefore more chary of large increases in council spending. Yet in seeking their support, Labour did have a tradition of municipal improvement by businessmen to draw on. Tommy Taylor and his "radical" cohorts such as Harry Ell and L.M. Isitt had been active in local as well as national politics at the turn of the century.[31] Influenced to some extent by similar progressive movements in British municipalities, they pressed for the rapid introduction of new technology to improve sanitation, drainage, public transport and power supply. These projects often necessitated borrowing, but much of the ratepaying electorate was prepared

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28. Press, 1 October, 1926.

29. Times, 29 March, 1927. Press, 28 April, 1927.

30. See Appendix D.

31. Scotter, op.cit., p.280-85.

to entrust the management of the city's finances to such respectable citizens who were often also successful businessmen. Prohibition was always high on their list of civic improvements. Furthermore, their activities had enjoyed considerable success in Christchurch. By 1926 the council's electricity department (MED) was in an excellent financial situation, amassing large reserves despite a steady reduction in power charges.[32] The city's tramway system was self-supporting.[33] Similarly, the council worker insurance scheme had operated successfully since before the war, the recently acquired municipal quarry was showing a profit,[34] and the system of housing loans by on-lending funds from the State Advances Department was proceeding without cost to the council. There were thus a number of encouraging precedents for a progressive yet respectable regime in the council chamber. Furthermore, the scale of the problems facing the city clearly necessitated a move in that direction.

Four of the party's local leaders were particularly important in establishing an image of responsibility and respectability to complement and to render more widely credible Labour's progressive policies for the city. These were the Rev. James Kendrick Archer, Daniel Giles Sullivan, James McCombs, and Elizabeth Reid McCombs.

Of this quartet, Archer was probably the most significant in winning new support for Labour in the mid-'twenties.

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32. Press, 23 November, 1926.

33. Sun, 18 May, 1926.

34. Christchurch City Council, Balance-Sheet and Statements, 1926, p.18.

He was a leading Baptist minister in the city and an ardent prohibitionist. Although prepared to espouse socialism to even the most conservative of audiences, his treatment of the subject as "applied christianity"[35] often made him appear more of a determinedly outspoken pastor chiding sinners for their selfishness rather than as a bloodthirsty revolutionary. It was a style to which many respectable Christchurch citizens were accustomed by their ministers and they appear to have appreciated it in relatively mild doses. Archer's political creed was strongly fabian - impatient with capitalists and the proletariat alike, and anxious to place society on a just and efficient basis. His background was in the respectable working class rather than in the professions, and this was reflected in an emphasis on conventional morality which was typically white-collar. An immigrant from England in 1909, Archer arrived in Christchurch in 1919 with some experience in the Labour Party in Napier, Wellington and Invercargill. He was elected to the Christchurch City Council and the North Canterbury Hospital Board in 1921, was President of the NZLP in the following year and its Vice-president from 1923 to 1931. In 1925 he was the party's mayoral candidate in Christchurch. With the non-Labour vote split between three aspirants he won relatively comfortably while taking around forty per cent of the poll, a similar proportion to that gained by Sullivan in the previous mayoral race.[36]

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35. "Socialism is the application to economic affairs of the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount. Long before I became a student of political economy I got my first lessons in socialism from the New Testament". Quoted in Press, 26 April, 1927.

36. Calculated from results published in Press, 28 April, 1927.

Archer proved extremely active and very popular in his first term as mayor. He showed considerable sympathy for the disadvantaged, especially the unemployed, and was clearly impatient to do more to help them.[37] At the same time he brooked no disrespect from "leaders of the unemployed" and favoured making able-bodied male applicants for charitable aid work for their assistance.[38] Citizens' Association councillors had few complaints about his treatment of them and his standing in normally non-Labour circles was heightened by his speeches and general behaviour during the visit of the Duke of York in early 1927.[39] Far from taking advantage of the occasion to show a socialist indifference to royal pomp, Archer proved to be an extremely loyal and respectful subject. In the election campaign later in the year, his opponents were reduced to claiming that they needed a majority on the council to keep him in line.[40] Apparently they gave their own candidate little chance.

D.G. Sullivan was younger than Archer but had been active in Christchurch politics for much longer. A native of the city, he had been a leading member of the Independent

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37. Times, 10 August, 10 September, 1926.

38. Press, 25 November, 1926. "I have no time for the man who would not give 20s. worth of labour for 20s. in wages". Press, 3 February, 1927. Also speech to deputation of unemployed, Press, 4 February, 1927.

39. An editorial in the Press, 13 April, 1927, remarked that his "admirable conduct during the Royal Visit" made "the duty" of turning him out particularly painful. Nevertheless it warned electors not to be swayed by his "personal popularity, his gift of bright and incisive speech, his versatility, or even his honesty". Archer's treatment of his royal visitor also drew praise from Coates (Times, 31 March, 1927).

40. Advertisement, Press, 21 April, 1927. Also editorial, Press, 26 April, 1927.

Political Labour League founded in Christchurch in 1905. Later he had played an active role in bringing together the "moderate" and "militant" sections of the political labour movement in a national party. He was always deeply concerned to keep that party united on a course sufficiently moderate to appeal to respectable working class opinion. Initially a skilled worker in the furniture trade, later a secretary of craft unions and a journalist, he had never been a "red fed", and was not closely associated with trade unions covering local body employees. He had long been an active supporter of the Temperance Movement, unusual for a male Roman Catholic, but an indication of how strongly he was integrated into the respectable working class of his city. A born diplomat with a lively sense of humour and some command of blarney, Sullivan tended to take individuals as he found them, and he showed a remarkable ability to co-operate and even form friendships with a wide range of people. Serving on the city council since 1915 and for the seat of Avon in parliament since 1919, he had proven an excellent committee man and had frequently won praise from his opponents. He was instrumental in the formation of a committee of Christchurch M.P.'s from both Labour and Reform parties to advance the interests of the city in Wellington.[41] By 1927 he was clearly more concerned with immediate practical improvements in the lives of the working people of Christchurch than in class conflict or the application of socialist theories. For example, he had been largely responsible for the council's successful

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41. Press, 19 February, 17 March, 15 May, 1926.

housing loans scheme,[42] which had gone a little way towards ameliorating the housing shortage in the city following the war. In order to get the scheme accepted, Sullivan had had to show that it would be run on "sound commercial lines" and to win the support of a number of his political opponents. Yet he was also very popular with the labouring class in Christchurch, perhaps in memory of his early years as a "soap-box orator". He was certainly successful in getting them to enrol and to vote, and he was very active as the party's organiser in the city for the 1927 municipal elections.

Although not standing for the city council in 1927, James McCombs, M.P. for Lyttelton, had constantly enhanced the local Labour party's respectable reputation. A strong prohibitionist and an erstwhile colleague of T.E. Taylor, McCombs had first stood for parliament as a Progressive Liberal in 1908. A well-read, very religious and respectable small businessman, he was the leader of the moderate wing of the parliamentary party. In 1919 he had tied with H.E. Holland in the election of party leader.[43] With Sullivan, he had publicly opposed Holland's friendly attitude towards the Soviet Union, and had strongly supported the exclusion of Communist Party members from membership of the Labour Party.[44] Amongst other party leaders, he was probably closest to Nash in character and politics - a scrupulously

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42. There was considerable popular acclaim for Archer's statement that "Dan Sullivan has done more for housing than all the rest of the councillors put together". Times, 13 April, 1927.

43. P. O'Farrell, Harry Holland; Militant Socialist, Canberra, 1964, p.102.

44. Ibid., p.129-31.

honest bookkeeper notable more for his grasp of the intricacies of capitalism than his impatience to abolish it.

Elizabeth McCombs was similarly important in widening the party's support amongst the respectable and the better-off. Well-educated and confident, yet feminine, she had won a reputation for hard work and practical kindness from her service to private charities and as a member of the hospital board from 1921. She was Labour's most prominent surviving representative in the city of a tradition of well-to-do women, forcefully promoting reforms of special interest to women from the more respectable classes. These issues included at various times prohibition, eugenics, anti-conscription, domestic and motherhood training for girls, and a higher age of consent. A number of her erst-while colleagues, such as Anie Elizabeth Herbert, now a Citizens' Association Councillor, had disassociated them-selves from Labour. But whether in that party or another they continued to command a significant following amongst women voters. Mrs. McCombs' attitudes were not greatly different from the non-Labour lady politicians. Like them she could be rather impatient with working people, tending to represent their best interests and not necessarily their opinions.[45] Nor was the rest of the Labour ticket in 1927 the collection of wild-eyed revolutionaries and impractical

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45. She called a deputation representing the unemployed "an illogical crowd" when they said they wanted work but criticised having to work for charitable aid. Press, 28 October, 1926. She appears to have failed to appreciate the strong feelings of many workers about award wages and payment in cash rather than kind.

dreamers that their opponents alleged them to be. Five of the candidates ran their own businesses or were married to successful businessmen and one was a clergyman.[46]

The outcome of the election demonstrated the popularity of Archer, seeing him capture over two-thirds of the vote. In contrast to the pattern in 1925, he won clear majorities in respectable working class suburbs as well as in labouring areas.[47] Twelve Labour councillors were elected to Citizens' four, more than reversing the previous line-up of five Labour to eleven Citizens'. Sullivan topped the poll by a clear margin, followed by Elizabeth McCombs and Armstrong. Of the successful Labour candidates, only five were known essentially as trade unionists.[48]

The jubilation which followed Labour's local success foreshadowed that which was to follow its national victory eight years later. During the remainder of 1927 and the first half of 1928 the new council approached the fulfilment of its election promises with enthusiasm. The city's labouring class had particular reason to be pleased with its performance during this period. Firstly, the council adopted a firm policy of doing work with its own labour force rather than letting it out to private contractors.[49] At the annual social for city council employees shortly after

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46. Clyde Carr was the clergyman; T.H. Butterfield was a grocer, P.W. Sharpe a retired cordial manufacturer, G.R. Hunter a coal merchant, F.M. Robson a boat manufacturer and the McCombs were in retailing. All except Carr had at some stage been involved in the industrial labour movement, however.

47. See Appendix D.

48. H.T. Armstrong, F.R. Cooke, R.M. Macfarlane, J. Roberts and G. Manning. The latter was now more involved in The Workers' Educational Association.

49. Times, 29 June, 1929; Press, 31 March, 1930.

the election, Councillor Armstrong expressed the hope that many more workers would be eligible to attend the following year.[50] His wish was amply fulfilled, with the council's permanent non-clerical workforce increasing by over seventeen per cent within that time.[51] Secondly, the wages of a number of categories of manual workers for the council were increased even though their award did not expire for a further year.[52] Thirdly, and most importantly, the Labour administration moved rapidly to help the unemployed by providing casual work. By the midwinter of 1927 the council was employing almost four hundred more men on its outside labouring staff than usual at that time of the year.[53] A few of these were employed on public reserves, but most worked on extensions to the city's water reticulation or on roadworks. Much of the roading was financed by a special £25,000 Relief of Unemployment Loan floated three months after Labour's victory.[54] In all, wages paid out to casual workers increased from £14,060 in 1926-27 to £33,662 in 1927-28.[55] The council's total payroll went up by almost a quarter. Additional funds were transferred to relief workers through subsidies on schemes approved by the private Citizens' Unemployment Committee (CUC).[56] Most of this work involved tidying up the banks and bed of the Avon River.

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50. Press, 11 May, 1927.
51. CSO, Local Authorities Handbook, 1928, 1929, "Boroughs - Employees and Wages".
52. Sun, 5 July, 1927; Press, 13 September, 1927.
53. Press, 19 August, 1927; Sun, 25 October, 1927.
54. Press, 19 July, 1927.
55. CSO, op.cit., loc.cit.
56. Press, 10 May, 26 July, 1927.

The development of new municipal services during the Labour council's first term was far less spectacular. Councillor Clyde Carr's plans for the municipalisation of the city's milk supply were strongly opposed by the council's two M.P.'s, Sullivan and Armstrong.[57] Both stressed that the government was unlikely to allow enabling legislation to pass, and suggested that sufficient improvement in milk quality could be achieved at much less cost by better inspection of the existing system. They seem to have been strongly conscious of the possible political costs of imposing a centralised system. Dairymen were working people, not capitalists, and were not normally prominent in the opposition to Labour. They were employed in a highly competitive field where it paid to keep on good terms with the customers. There was no exclusive "block system", so purchasers normally did not have to buy from a particular vendor. In all, around seven hundred persons were licensed to sell milk,[58] and together with families and friends they constituted a potentially powerful voting lobby. With some indication that stricter inspection was improving quality and the election of Carr as M.P. for Timaru at the end of 1928, the decision on municipalisation was postponed. Significant concern had been created amongst a large section of the electorate to little end.

The proposal for a city produce market, on the other hand, was implemented before the end of 1927. However, the reality proved to be a travesty of the ideal. A vacant

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57. Sun, 30 August, 1927; Times, 9 November, 1927.

58. Sun, 23 May, 1927.

section owned by the MED in Worcester Street just west of Cathedral Square was hastily cleared and licences to erect stalls were sold to a number of small entrepreneurs.[59] This arrangement quickly attracted the attention of the local Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Fletcher Telford, and ice-cream and poultry stalls were closed almost immediately.[60] Other improvements were also ordered in the interests of public health. Mayor Archer, a strong proponent of the market, repeatedly implied that Fletcher Telford was politically motivated.[61] However, it would seem to have been very unwise to open a makeshift market beside a busy central city street at the height of a Christchurch summer. Nor'westers, dust, exhaust fumes and flies afflicted the market as much as the machinations of vested interests. Nevertheless, opposition was considerable. Many small shoppers complained that the stallholders simply pocketted their savings on overheads, and the whole project ran at a loss to the council.[62] The number of stalls soon dwindled, and despite a vigorous verbal rearguard action, the council finally closed the market and sold the section.[63]

The promise to provide a central city women's rest room led to even greater controversy. During 1928 the council proposed to incorporate the facility in a large new shelter

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59. Press, 23 December, 1927. The arrangement was initially supported by the Sun, 20 December, 1927, and savagely attacked by the Times, 23 December, 1927.

60. Press, 29 December, 1927.

61. Press, 24 December, 1927.

62. Times, 30 January, 4, 14 February, 18 December, 1928; Press, 11 February, 1929; Sun, 14 May, 1928; 9 February, 1929. By the end of 1928 Sullivan was describing the site as "inadequate" after considerable discussion in the Labour caucus. Times, 10 December, 1928.

63. Press, 11 June, 1929.

for tram passengers on a section of Cathedral Square known as the Godley Plot. This had been bequeathed to the city some fifty years earlier by John Robert Godley, one of the "founding fathers" of Christchurch. A furore ensued as thousands of citizens, led by members of the colonial elite, mobilised to defend the legacy of the "pioneers". Large public meetings of protest were held and a petition drawn up as the local newspaper closely associated with the elite thundered against "the lavatory party" which planned to turn Cathedral Square into "Lavatory Square".[64] Finally, a legal action was brought to contest the council's interpretation of the Godley Bequest, and the court's decision went in favour of the protestors.[65] While the whole controversy turned Christchurch into a national laughing-stock as a sort of antipodean Clochemerle, the battle was fought with extreme bitterness on both sides. Archer's irascible attacks on his opponents appear to have been particularly wounding. He described one letter from the Canterbury Women's Club requesting the site be shifted as

> "extraordinary, unwomanly, the sort of thing a 'hooligan' or 'silly young flapper' might write, ignorant, stupid, irresponsible, regardless of facts, deserving of the severest snub, inspired, propaganda, selfish, impracticable, hysterical,...insane, and worthy to be ignored".[66]

This was not the sort of treatment to win votes amongst politically active well-to-do women. Archer polled poorly as th

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64. Press, 23 April, 2,3,19 May. For details of protests, Press, 28 July, 21 August. An elderly independent member of the Tramway Board pointed out that the disputed area had been used as a lavatory during the time of "the pioneers". Sun, 8 August, 1928.

65. Press, 17 May, 1929.

66. Star, 1 May, 1928.

Labour candidate for the generally wealthy Christchurch North in the general election of 1928, which took place at the height of the controversy.[67]

Although vested interests did do their best to obstruct these projects, Labour's efforts were all effectively blighted by the desire to fulfil the party's election promises as cheaply as possible. The use of existing council sections for the market and the rest rooms despite their unsuitability for these purposes, the construction of ramshackle stalls by private interests, and the reluctance to match even the non-Labour Wellington City Council in the centralisation of the city's milk supply, all betray a reluctance to spend any more than the absolute minimum on new facilities.

The growing burden of spending on aspects of new technology was one of the major reasons for this reluctance. For example, the council took on thirteen traffic inspectors between 1926 and 1929.[68] With salaries in excess of two hundred and fifty pounds, the purchase and maintenance of several motor-cycles, and the provision of uniforms and superannuation, this represented a sizeable new commitment for a council with a rates revenue of around £120,000. Likewise the problem of roading and the advent of legal responsibility for town-planning involved a large expansion in the council's salaried staff. Between 1925 and 1928 the number of such persons employed in the City Engineer's office increased from six to eighteen.[69] Between 1925 and 1931

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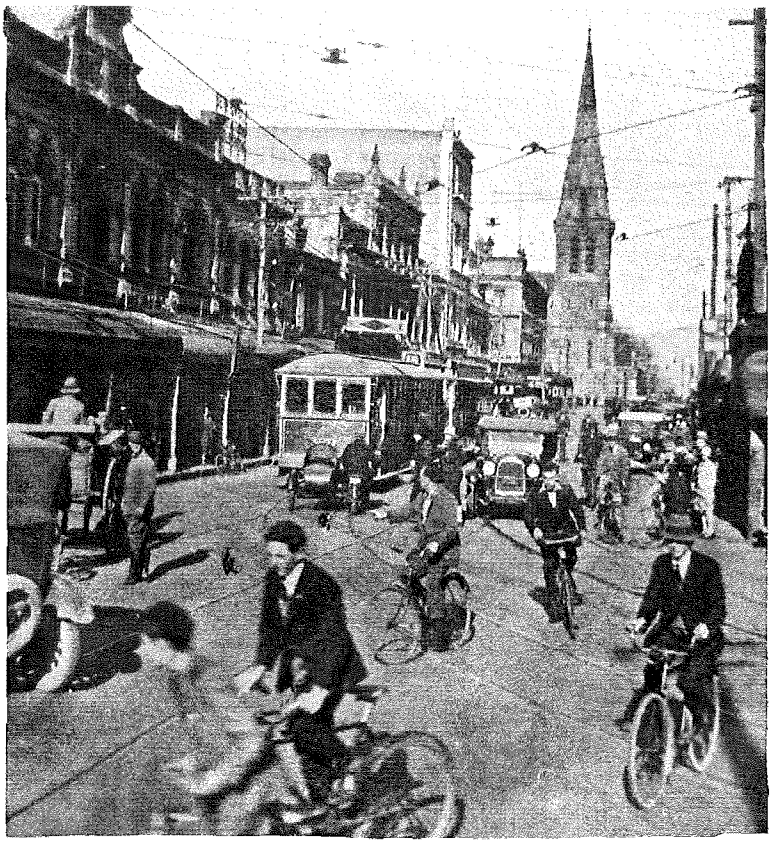
67. Press, 21 November, 1928.

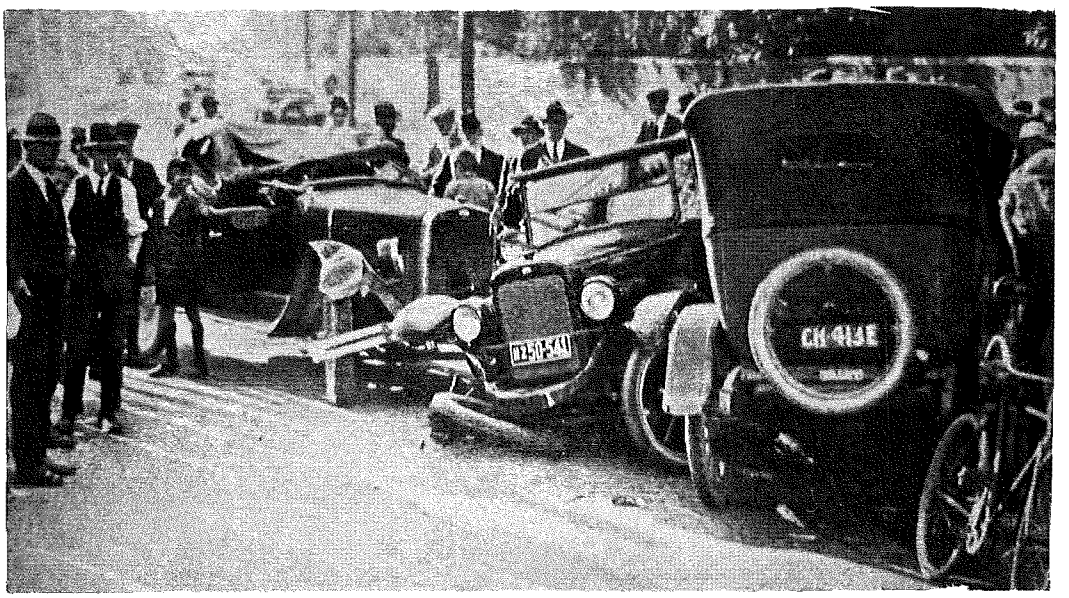
68. Press, 29 April, 1927; 1 October, 1929.

69. Times, 5 February, 1929.

21. New opportunities and new responsibilities. One of Christchurch City Council's new traffic inspectors regards some of the city's numerous and rather anarchic cyclists. Note the diversity of modes of transport. The picture was taken at the intersection of Colombo, Armagh and Victoria Streets.
(Weekly Press and Referee, 2 June, 1927.)

22. A substantial hazard to health. Brakes, road surfaces, traffic control, driver protection and driver education lagged far behind the potential of private motor transport for speed.
(Weekly Press and Referee, 2 April, 1925.)

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the total number of administrative staff employed by the council (including the MED) rose from 90 to 137 and the amount expended on their salaries increased from twenty-four to forty thousand pounds.[70] The growth in expenditure on white-collar staff and their work narrowed significantly the council's financial room to manoeuvre if it was to avoid increasing the rates. Already facing the need to service a large roading loan, it had little scope for further spending on new municipal projects. After the first year of Labour control on the city council this emphasis on economy began to affect the degree of council assistance to the unemployed. Spending on outside workers increased by only two per cent during 1928-29, despite pay rises in a number of awards.[71] The number of casual workers employed in winter was about half that of the previous year,[72] and there was no repetition of the unemployment loan of 1927. Once again the council co-operated with the CUC, and the largest part of its spending on unemployment went towards the construction of a boulevard along the banks of the Avon in the Linwood and Dallington areas.[73] Unfortunately a high proportion of the funds devoted to this project was used to purchase riverside property rather than to pay the unemployed themselves. The net amount expended by the council on unemployment relief, exclusive of grants from the government and private organisations, actually decreased from £9,000 to

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70. CSO, op.cit., 1926, 1932, "Boroughs - Employees and Wages".
71. Ibid, 1929, 1930, loc.cit., and Press, 15 May, 4 July, 1928.
72. Sun, 6 July, 1928; Press, 24 July, 4 August, 1928.
73. Times, 23 July, 15 October, 1929.

under £7,400 from 1927-28 to 1928-29.[74] This was despite the fact that registered unemployment was tending to worsen. Labour acted relatively quickly on the question of roading in the city, floating a £220,000 loan during 1928 to construct the first stage of a plan drawn up by the City Engineer and projected to cost over two million pounds in all over seventy years.[75] Yet the extent to which the new works provided assistance to the unemployed was limited. Council officers and many members of the public had voiced their concern at the lack of fitness and slow work-rate of relief workers on existing jobs.[76] Furthermore, the roading plan called for substantial expenditure on equipment, including a large bitumen plant which required lorries to provide rapid transport for its immense production. Slow or careless workers could greatly increase the cost of a project when such methods were used. Consequently the council decided to take members of the unemployed onto the work only if they were "fully efficient".[77] Many of them

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74. Calculated from Christchurch City Council, Balance Sheet and Statements, 1928, 1929.

75. Press, 19 July, 1927. The plan envisaged a net saving within a few years as expenditure on road repairs (including much labour) was reduced. Sun, 19 October, 1927. Debt-servicing was to be paid entirely from the council's share of petrol tax. Times, 24 January, 1929. Nevertheless, it was something of a surprise when the loan was approved by an overwhelming majority (3599 to 1363) of the small number of ratepayers who voted on it. The reason lay in the heavy support from the wealthy north-west of the city, normally strongly opposed to new expenditure, but now probably concerned for its motor cars. Star, 7 September, 1928.

76. Press, 28 July, 1927; Sun, 11 July, 1928; 4 April, 1929.

77. As Chairman of the Works Committee, H.T. Armstrong told a deputation of the unemployed bluntly that the council was not prepared to go into overdraft to help provide them with work and that the roading scheme called for more machinery rather than labour. He was seconded by the City Engineer and by Archer. Times, 28 November, 1928.

did not fall into this category, sometimes because of the hardships of being unemployed.

Surprisingly, Sullivan appears to have been the individual most responsible for the council's parsimony. In his capacity as Chairman of the Finance Committee, he was strongly conscious of Labour's pledge not to increase the rates, and anxious to prove that both Dan Sullivan and the Labour Party could handle public finances "responsibly". Towards the end of his first year in office, he repeatedly expressed the hope that the council would achieve a budget surplus, and a profit of several thousand pounds was duly declared[78] - but regrettably no dividend. Defending Labour's record shortly before the 1929 Municipal Election, Sullivan proudly maintained that the new council had won the approval of Capital:

> most significantly of all, perhaps, is the fact that, despite all the dismal predictions made by our enemies when we took office, the investing public have shown complete confidence in Labour's financial administration, have taken up our debentures, and given us all the money necessary, and at rates of interest lower than those authorised by the [Local] Government Loans Board.

At the same time

> the rates have not been increased, but kept where they were, in spite of all the difficulties that such a course involved, and ways have been found to carry on without taking any extra money from the ratepayers.[79]

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78. One calculation of the surplus was £14,000, as against the mere £6,500 achieved by the Citizens' Council the previous year. Sun, 2 May, 1928. Some of the 180 "casuals" laid off at the beginning of February "due to lack of funds" may have looked askance at such figures. Press, 9 February, 1928.

79. Times, 14 March, 1929. He had already claimed to have "actually turned the position to the advantage of the city, by securing from the various Governments in power large sums of money in subsidies which have been spent on the improvement of the city streets". Times, 4 April, 1929.

In playing the part of a Philip Snowden on the Labour council, Sullivan was not just betraying an innate conservatism or succumbing meekly to the influence of council officers. It was rather his astute grasp of local politics that made him emphasise a conservative approach to expenditure. He was after all the most successful and experienced Christchurch politician in the local Labour caucus. He knew his city and its electorate very well, and was aware of the importance placed by the respectable working classes on home ownership. This was an ideal which was particularly widely fulfilled in Christchurch. In 1926 only 29.5% of the city's dwellings were rented, compared with 34.1% in Dunedin, 43.9% in Wellington, and 44.4% in Auckland.[80] Therefore, as Sullivan never tired of emphasising, the majority of ratepayers were working people. If Labour was to be assured of their continued electoral support, it had to avoid any large increases in the rates. Archer might advocate a special rate levy for the purpose of unemployment relief, but he stressed that this was "a personal policy"[81] and he was not supported by Sullivan. The latter was well aware that a pound on the average rate bill would soon evaporate much of the sympathy for the unskilled unemployed from the independent working classes. He was clearly conscious that cynical criticism of the labouring class was never far from the surface amongst them. After the 1927 election he had joined the Mayor in warning council employees

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80. Calculated from figures in Census, 1926, Vol.8, p.6.

81. He noted that "you [the CUC] wouldn't like it and Christchurch wouldn't have it". Press, 20 September, 1929.

that there should be no "shirking"[82] and he strongly criticised those of the unemployed who continued to refuse to work in return for their hospital board rations.[83] He also claimed that relief workers were "forty per cent less efficient"[84] than ordinary council staff.

The imposition of tight financial policies led to dissension amongst Labour councillors. Some years later Sullivan told of one clash between himself and Armstrong, then Chairman of the Works Committee and a strong champion of council workers.

> Mr. Armstrong wanted more money than we could let him have for his department and I had a hard task paring him down. At last his patience broke, and with a lowering frown, he positively yelled at me that there was no miser like an Irish miser and I could have his resignation if I liked.[85]

The application of a little of the Sullivan charm appears to have overcome this "breeze". However, Armstrong did not publicly disown his son, Arthur Ernest (Tommy) when he stood as an Independent Socialist against the official Labour ticket in 1929,[86] partly on the grounds that the council was neglecting the unemployed.[87]

Sullivan's financial moderation was matched by his stands on each of the controversies that beset the Labour council. He consistently adopted a conciliatory role,

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82. Press, 11 May, 1927.

83. Press, 16 January, 1928.

84. Sun, 12 January, 1928.

85. Press, 11 February, 1936.

86. Press, 2 May, 1929.

87. Press, 18 May, 1929. A.E. Armstrong also called for a municipal washhouse, picture show, training farm, household fuel depot and gymnasium. Press, 24 April. 1929. Traditional proposals for municipalisation had been concerned with basic services - Armstrong belonged to a new generation which wanted cheaper entertainment as well.

attempting to find solutions acceptable to Labour's opponents rather than confronting them. As Archer became more abrasive, Sullivan stressed co-operation. He claimed to be merely invoking "this softening of the asperities of public life with personal friendship and respect [which] is much more characteristic of the people of the British Empire than of any other [sic] in the world".[88]

Besides the question of the rest-rooms in Cathedral Square and the problems of the city market, a number of moves towards further regulating the city's aesthetic and moral life led the council into controversy. Some of these were related to aspects of the new technology. In recent years there had been a number of complaints about noisy motor cars and riotous, drunken and loose behaviour late at night around central city dance halls.[89] Two of these halls were closed by the Labour council in its first year - Sullivan included this action in a short list of its accomplishments to the end of 1927.[90] The remaining halls were obliged to prevent patrons from leaving the premises and then returning, possibly after drinking or "misbehaving" in cars outside.[91] Motor transport had encouraged the proliferation of advertising signs along arterial roads within and just outside towns. Archer, a vigorous opponent of roadside hoardings, regarded their closer regulation as an important achievement. He

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88. Times, 18 April, 1929. Also his belief that party differences on the Council had lessened since Labour's victory. Times, 20 December, 1928.

89. Star, 17, 27 September, 1927; 6, 20, 28 March, 1928. Sun, 29 June, 1927.

90. Times, 8 December, 1927.

91. Star, 31 January, 1929. "A by-law that arouses much hilarity amongst visitors, but is very humiliating to Christchurch people".

clearly saw them as a potential source of moral as well as visual pollution, declaring of one confiscated poster that "we could not even show it to all the employees in this [town hall]".[92] Similarly, he and a number of other councillors, mainly from the Labour side, opposed the issue of permits for concerts or motion picture performances on Christmas Day or at Easter.[93] Such "wowserism" was increasingly unpopular, especially amongst youthful citizens and it may well have contributed to the support for Tommy Armstrong.[94]

The outcome of the 1929 Municipal Election proved disastrous for Labour. Archer's majority slumped from more than ten thousand to less than five hundred, and the number of Labour councillors was reduced from twelve to six. The Citizens' Association increased its representation on the council to eight, and the balance was held by Tommy Armstrong and another Independent, Dr. Henry Thomas Joynt Thacker, a former Mayor of the city, and Liberal M.P. for Christchurch East between 1914 and 1922. In the light of the United Party's victory in the previous year's General Election, it is perhaps significant that the Citizens' Association's nearly successful mayoral candidate, William Hayward, had also been associated with United and its

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92. Press, 11 October, 1927.

93. Press, 27 April, 1928. Archer was also widely criticised for a message to Kingsford Smith on the eve of his trans-Tasman flight telling the aviator that he would not be prepared to greet him if he flew in on a Sunday. Sun, 3 September, 1928; Press, 6 September, 1928.

94. A rather different moral controversy may have alienated many older citizens. In March 1928, a number of older Labour councillors resurrected a longstanding debate about the presence of artillery pieces as war trophies on city reserves (Sun, 9 June, 1928). The question had arisen originally after the Boer War with the arrival of a captured "pom-pom". The number of such monuments to Canterbury's military prowess had increased after the Great War with the addition of a massive and particularly ugly german howitzer ....

Liberal predecessors.[95] It has also been noted that within urban areas the "Liberal revival" of 1928 was strongest in working areas[96] and Hayward certainly increased the non-Labour vote in such suburbs.[97] At some booths it doubled. More importantly, the total vote tended to decline in both labouring and better-off working areas. Organisation appears to have been poorer than it had been two years earlier. Sullivan was not in charge this time and he was probably right, if a little immodest, in criticising the party's failure to increase enrolments on the same scale as in 1927.[98] However, the most striking aspect of the election was a spectacular increase in the vote in the wealthy north-west and west, and the commercial city centre. The sons and daughters of "the pioneers" had their revenge on Archer.

Some electors may have been deterred or confused by the new preferential voting system in the voting for councillors. However, there were actually fewer informal votes than in 1927 and little evidence of an alphabetical "donkey vote" - those elected constituted rather less of an "ABC" council than their predecessors. Sullivan demonstrated his continuing popularity, winning almost twice the number of first preferences as the next highest polling candidate and four times that of the next Labour councillor, Elizabeth McCombs.[99]

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95. Sun, 29 April, 1929. Previously there had been suggestions that a local Liberal Party of young businessmen might contest the election in opposition to the "Tory" Citizens' Association. Star, 9, 11 February, 1929; Sun, 11 February, 1929.

96. R.M. Chapman, The Political Scene, 1919-1931, Auckland, 1969, p.55.

97. See Appendix D.

98. Press, 3 May, 1929.

99. Christchurch City Council, Town Clerk's Report, 1930.

"Danny Boy" remained high on the local political hit-parade but the standing of his supporting artists had clearly slipped. Small business resentments towards Labour was personified by the election for the Citizens' Association of John Parlane, a dairyman. The dairymen of Christchurch had been particularly upset by the Labour Council's moves towards municipalisation of the City's milk supply. They had held a parade of their milk carts through the centre of town on the eve of the election to demonstrate their opposition to Labour's plans.[100] The manner in which this issue split the working class is exemplified by the fact that John Parlane's brother, Edward, was secretary of the Canterbury Drivers' Union and one of the successful Labour candidates for the city council.

The election was followed by a very considerable increase in council spending on the unemployed. The net amount expended under the heading "Relief of Unemployment" more than doubled to £18,480.[101] This change of policy did not reflect any decision to adopt permanently a greater responsibility for relief work. It was rather a result of the changed composition on the council and the unforseen increase in the size and intractability of the problem during the year. The subsequent increase in spending and higher rates were to create severe difficulties for the Labour council by irritating many of its traditional working-class supporters who were also ratepayers. If anything, they had expected a reduction in their rates assessments under Labour.

In order to stay "in power", the Labour leadership now had to maintain the support, or at least the acquiescence, of

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100. Sun, 1 May, 1929.

101. Christchurch City Council, Balance Sheet and Statements, 1930.

the two independent councillors, Thacker and Armstrong, both of whom advocated greater spending on the unemployed. Furthermore, at least one member of the Labour caucus, Fred Cooke, was inclined to agree with them.[102] Thacker was persuaded to give his general support to Labour by the simple stratagem of electing him to the post of Deputy-mayor.[103] Not even his most ardent admirers could ever have described "the Doctor" as a modest man, and he relished the opportunity to thumb his nose at a Citizens' Association that he now considered "Tory-dominated". However, he also proposed that the council employ more relief workers immediately, and delighted in his opportunities to side with deputations of the unemployed against Labour's financial conservatism.[104] Thacker had not won parliamentary elections in Christchurch East without some appreciation of labouring attitudes. A.E. Armstrong's views on the need for increased relief work had been made clear during the election campaign. Labour's leadership on the city council was therefore faced with the alternatives of co-operating with the Citizens' Association councillors to keep unemployment expenditure down, or placating the Independents by increasing it.

At the same time, developments during the first year of United's rule were revealing that the problem of unemployment was more deep-seated and serious than had been envisaged. The leaders of both parties on the city council had maintained that unemployment was a "national problem" and should be handled by the state.[105] United had come to power with

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102. Press, 23 July, 1929.

103. Press, 15 May, 1929.

104. Times, 29 June, 1929.

105. Press, 6 July, 1926.

promises to solve unemployment by government action. Sullivan and McCombs approached Ward as soon as the motion of no-confidence in the Coates Government was passed and requested that work on the extension of the South Island Main Trunk Railway should be put in hand immediately.[106] Recognising that it would take some time for a significant number of the unemployed to be absorbed on such a complex project, they also requested interim assistance for Christchurch. Sir Joseph's delayed reaction was to offer £25,000 to each of the main centres, to be spent on the labour component of relief work on a £-for-£ basis.[107] The generosity of this very typical Ward gesture was more apparent than real as it involved a net reduction rather than an increase in the rate of government subsidy. Nevertheless, it gave urban local authorities the opportunity to continue their role in the relief of unemployment, if only for a few months.

The reaction to the government's offer within the City Council was illuminating. In the first place, it was kept secret during the municipal election campaign. The reason for this secrecy was not fully explained publicly.[108] It may have been a precondition imposed by Ward so as not to influence the election in any way. However, this explanation was not advanced, and in the light of his later stance it seems equally likely that Sullivan did not want the question discussed before the poll. In the heat of the campaign there

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106. Times, 5 December, 1929.

107. Times, 9 May, 1929.

108. Archer said he had kept the offer secret because he did not want the old Council "to pass judgement on it". Press, 9 May, 1929.

would have been immense pressure on Labour councillors to accept an offer, which Sullivan apparently wanted renegotiated.

Now the question had to be discussed.[109] Sullivan pointed out to the council that a very large sum would have to be raised locally if full advantage was to be taken of the grant. He suggested that as much as possible of the subsidy should be attracted by public subscriptions rather than burdening the council with another loan. Elizabeth McCombs maintained that little had changed, and that the council should tell the government that it did not consider unemployment a responsibility of local bodies. Citizens' councillors also opposed taking up the offer and were strongly critical of the cost, quality and "high wages" entailed in the relief works so far. Archer was, however, very anxious that the opportunity should not be lost entirely and it was finally agreed that negotiations with the government should continue. Meanwhile, the council took on approximately two hundred "extras", to be paid out of revenue and existing loans.[110] The Heathcote County Council, a much smaller local body, was employing a hundred and thirty such workers at the same time.[111]

However, the city was already overspending on work for the unemployed for which it had not provided in the estimates. Councillors began to take up positions on how much money should be allocated to relief work in 1929-30 and how the necessary funds should be raised. Inevitably, eyes turned to the MED's reserve funds. The continued rapid growth in sales of current had allowed the department to accumulate

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109. Press, 18 May, 1929.

110. Press, 31 May, 1929; Times, 25 June, 1929.

111. Press, 18 May, 1929.

over a hundred thousand pounds on fixed deposit.[112] During the first term of the Labour council relatively small amounts of MED money had been transferred to other purposes, including unemployment relief. Both the Citizens' Association and Elizabeth McCombs, as Chairman of the council's Electricity Committee, had strongly opposed this procedure.[113] They held to the view of the department's officers that such reserves should be built up further to give the Council the option of securing an independent supply of electricity if the government refused to renew Christchurch's favourable bulk contract with the PWD.[114] Mrs McCombs maintained that the MED should be run as a separate undertaking, operating in the interests of electricity consumers rather than those of all citizens. She was supported in her stand by other members of the Labour caucus, including Percy Sharpe, a wealthy local soft-drink manufacturer. He claimed that "the Labour Party has never done anything except on sound business lines...".[115]

The debate on the estimates took place in July, with the Finance Committee under the Chairmanship of Sullivan recommending that £15,000 should be transferred from the MED for unemployment relief rather than placing any further burden on the ratepayers.[116] Elizabeth McCombs opposed this, protesting that the majority of the users of electricity were small property owners and that the proposal was therefore

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112. Press, 23 July, 1929.

113. Christchurch City Council, Minutes, 1 August, 1927.

114. Times, 5 August, 1930.

115. Times, 25 June, 1929.

116. Press, 23 July, 1929.

"a class measure".[117] She advocated a £30,000 public loan instead. Fred Cooke overcame his antipathy towards money-lenders[118] sufficiently to up this amount to £50,000. On the other hand, Sullivan maintained that £25,000 was as much as the council should find. He too rose to the defence of the small property owner at the expense of the unemployed labourer; "the overwhelming majority of ratepayers are working people with mortgages on their properties, and it would be as unfair to rate them for unemployment as to rate the users of electricity". He suggested that £12,000 might be all that was necessary to employ three hundred men for six to eight weeks, after which the government had promised work would begin on the extension of the South Island Main Trunk Railway. Neither Sullivan nor Mrs McCombs rejected using the plight of the unemployed as a lever on the government. The former observed that

> the money had to come from somewhere, and if it did not come from the Electricity Department, it would have to come from the ratepayers. If the electricity consumers found nothing and the ratepayers found nothing, the money would have to come from the Consolidated Fund.[119]

Nevertheless, he suggested that some of the funds should be borrowed from the MED and that the council should pay interest to its own department.

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117. Presumably she meant a measure in favour of the labouring class, which comprised the majority of the unemployed. Only a comparatively small proportion of property-owners - generally from the more wealthy - possessed electric heaters or cookers and were therefore substantial consumers of electricity.

118. He had opposed the roading loan on the grounds that it would lead the council to pay large additional amounts to such people. A much smaller scheme from revenue, as Cooke wanted, would have provided even less help to the unemployed. However, a Keynesian compromise of Socialist principles did not come easily to men like Fred Cooke. Press, 10 July, 1928.

119. Times, 23 July, 1929.

Some of the strongest support for the unemployed came from Archer. Referring to the MED's reserve, he declared angrily that it was "immoral to have all this money while people are starving". He would spend "every last penny of it" on the unemployed. Thacker and Armstrong also maintained that the amount transferred should be greater than £25,000. Sullivan rejected this suggestion and Elizabeth McCombs mercifully moved the discussion into committee.

The outcome of these deliberations was made public a fortnight later when the estimates were presented.[120] Sullivan had largely got his own way. The council was to borrow only £12,500 from the MED for unemployment relief, and £8,000 for the building of a rest room in the Square - well clear of the Godley Plot. One reason for Sullivan's anxiety not to increase the amount of rates money for unemployment relief was also revealed. The rate per pound of rateable property was actually reduced, but following the city's recent revaluation, the amount which the ratepayers had to find for the council increased by almost eighteen per cent. There was some consolation for most ratepayers, but little for the unemployed, when the Electricity Committee announced a few weeks later that its lighting charges to domestic consumers would be reduced to ¾d. per unit, the lowest in New Zealand.[121]

The reaction to the council's estimates illustrated Labour's dilemma in Christchurch politics. There was little public praise for the decision to extend further assistance

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120. Press, 6 August, 1929.

121. Times, 2 September, 1929.

to the unemployed and considerable criticism of the increase in rates. The Star devoted a long, critical editorial to the "huge rate increases".[122] One correspondent styling himself "Labour Supporter of the Past" stated that his rates has risen three pounds and that the Labour Party was now discouraging working men such as himself from keeping vegetable gardens.[123] More ominously, Councillor Armstrong began to make difficulties for Labour on the council, apparently disgruntled by its level of spending on unemployment relief. To begin with, he persisted in making a statement on the sensitive question of the municipal market site despite being ruled out of order by Archer.[124] This was to be a foretaste of several such confrontations in later years. The following month he joined with the Citizens' Association in voting down a Labour proposal for a consolidated insurance scheme covering all New Zealand municipalitites.[125] He claimed that such an arrangement would lead to southern money being invested in the North Island by a northern-dominated association. Armstrong also scotched any further moves towards a municipal milk supply, arguing that it would jeopardise the jobs of hundreds of men.[126]

Nineteen-thirty was a bleak year in Christchurch, and a particularly difficult one for the Labour city council. The United Government's promise to give work to all the unemployed, accelerated adoption of new technology and increasing international economic difficulties all tended

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122. Star, 6 August, 1929.

123. Times, 11 September, 1929.

124. Press, 3 September, 1929.

125. Press, 31 October, 1929.

126. Press, 30 October, 1929.

to swell the numbers of men seeking relief work. Furthermore, a substantial proportion of the unemployed had rejected the offer of government work far from the city.[127] The council was obliged to spend an additional thousand pounds on relief work over the Christmas period of 1929-30. An attempt to get the government to meet most of the cost of local special work through the hospital board failed, and in February a further thousand pounds was allocated to provide work for the minority of unemployed men who were married and supporting more than three children.[128]

Yet A.E. Armstrong, the maverick Independent Labour councillor, continued to attack the Labour council's contribution in this area. He echoed the Citizens' Association criticism of the existing relief work as "unreproductive and temporary" and put forward a solution that was to become his hallmark in future years.[129] He moved that the council should reduce the weekly hours of work of its staff from forty-four to forty without reducing their pay. Sullivan seconded the motion pro forma, but claimed that the proposal would cost the council £8,000 for the employment of only thirty-five or forty extra men. The money would have to come from the rates or the MED, and the council was in no position to increase the rates again. Archer supported the motion. He maintained that the forty-hour week was coming anyway, and that if its immediate introduction would cost only £8,000 it should be tried. Nevertheless Armstrong's proposal was defeated.

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127. Sun, 31 October, 18 November, 1929.

128. Press, 5 February, 1930.

129. Press, 18 February, 1930.

23. Rev. John Kendrick Archer, Mayor of Christchurch, 1925-31. A prohibitionist, and proponent of legislation against gambling and for enforced Sabbath observance. A strong advocate of greater assistance to the unemployed, and a firm socialist who came to offend political conservatives and social liberals, not least by the force with which he voiced his opinions.
(Official Christchurch City Council photograph, 1933.)

24. Arthur Ernest Armstrong, Christchurch City Councillor, 1929-35; MP for Napier, 1943-51. A young maverick who made enormous difficulties for Sullivan and the council "coalition". He advocated reduced hours for city council workers and cuts in higher salaries in order to provide more jobs for the unemployed.
(Official Christchurch City Council photograph, 1933.)

On the other hand, Labour was still suffering from the political repercussions of the year's increase in rates, and when Councillor Sharpe died in March the party faced an awkward by-election. Despite the candidature of H.T. Armstrong M.P. and a vigorous campaign, the seat was lost to the Citizens' Association.[130] Now Labour could no longer count on a Council majority even with Thacker's support. Sullivan announced that the party was relinquishing all its chairmanships and would be "going into opposition".[131]

The Citizens' Association administration which controlled the council between the beginning of April, 1930, and the end of April, 1931, followed similar policies to those of its Labour predecessor. No move was made to consider another unemployment loan or to institute any large new public works, and no further inroads were made into the MED's record annual profit of £42,000.[132] Net expenditure on unemployment relief was cut by almost half on the previous year, although this was off-set by an increase in public donations to the CUC and, more importantly, greater government assistance. Emergency charitable collections during 1929 had been largely directed towards helping the victims of the Murchison Earthquake; in 1930 local unemployment was again the central concern.[133] At the same time, the government moved to a full

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130. Press, 2 April, 1930.

131. Press, 5 April, 1930.

132. Press, 24 June, 1930. Now "in opposition" Elizabeth McCombs suggested floating a small public loan of £8,500 for unemployment relief. Even that was rejected. Times, 16, 24 June, 1930. Mrs McCombs suggested that a quarter of the MED's surplus could be devoted to reduced charges for users of heaters and cookers. Press, 25 June, 1930.

133. Over two thousand pounds were donated from private services for city council relief work. Christchurch City Council, Balance Sheet and Statements, 1931.

£-for-£ subsidy on local body relief works during the year,[134] and the newly established Unemployment Board improved on this by paying the full labour cost of such works.[135] This normally amounted to over two-thirds of the total expense. The council made some use of the board's first three schemes, which came into operation shortly before Christmas in 1930. Consequently, about nine hundred men received two weeks' pay to tide them over a holiday season which was anxious rather than festive.[136] The council leadership also joined in the initial enthusiasm for the No. 5 Scheme. Following a meeting of representatives from all the local bodies in and around Christchurch, the council took on a thousand relief workers.[137] This was only a few hundred short of the maximum it was to employ at any time during the depression.[138] Its contribution in early 1931 was again proportionately far less than that of the Heathcote County Council, which pledged itself to take on 350 men but which was employing over 550 relief workers by the end of February.[139] Nevertheless, the City Council's effort went a long way towards absorbing Christchurch's three thousand registered unemployed.[140] Furthermore, the Citizens'

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134. In June the government agreed to subsidise private donations for relief work materials and labour on a £-for-£ basis and to provide 28/- per £ spent by local bodies on relief labour. Times, 12 June, 1930. In November the Unemployment Board made the basis of local body subsidy £2 per £. Press, 29 November, 1930.

135. Press, 16 December, 1930.

136. Sun, 6 January, 1931.

137. Times, 27, 30 January, 1931.

138. The maximum appears to have been between 1,300 and 1,350, in the depths of the winter of 1931. Christchurch City Council, Minutes, 27 July, 10 August, 1931.

139. Press, 25 February, 1931. At one stage in January, the Heathcote County Council had been employing 106 relief workers to the City's six. Times, 8, 10 January, 1931.

140. CSO, Prices, Wages, etc, 1931, p.23.

Association councillors who controlled the council played an active role, alongside Archer, in bringing together Christchurch's local body leaders to ensure that the area's unemployed received the benefit of the Unemployment Board's new scheme.[141] They pressed their often very reluctant counterparts on other local authorities to commit themselves to relief works.[142] Especially prominent in this difficult task were Councillor (later Sir) Ernest Herbert Andrews, who had been Chairman of the CUC for several years and who was now Chairman of the council's Finance Committee and effectively leader of the council, and John Walton Beanland, Chairman of the Works Committee and also active on the CUC.

Sullivan had criticised the extent of the new council leadership's aid to the unemployed during 1930, comparing it unfavourably with that in other centres.[143] However, there was no concerted move by Labour councillors to advocate specific increases. On the contrary, the emphasis tended to remain on the protection of the MED reserves and the ratepayer. Sullivan proudly called attention to the fact that he had achieved another budget surplus during the 1929-30 financial

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141. A second conference was held at the end of April when the No. 5 Scheme was reconstituted. Then the City Council agreed to provide 922 - around a third - of the 2,728 relief work places pledged by local bodies in and around the city. Press, 28 April, 1931.

142. Wealthy Riccarton Borough appears to have been particularly resistant. However, it was persuaded to place 23 men in work late in April - thus shouldering rather less than one per cent of the local burden. Ibid. Over a hundred of its residents had to find work with the City Council. Press, 1 September, 1931. Unrepentant borough councillors suggested the unemployed find work in the country. Press, 7 September, 1931.

143. Press, 28 October, 1930.

year.[144] This time the profit amounted to over seventeen thousand pounds, roughly equivalent to the council's net expenditure on unemployment relief. But instead of suggesting that the funds thus accumulated should be directed towards further spending on that rapidly growing problem, he implied that it had been earmarked for a reduction in rates. He regretted that with the change in council leadership, "ratepayers were not going to receive the full benefit of the savings".

Labour had lost another seat on the council following the death of Fred Cooke in July, 1930,[145] but it had also discovered an issue of principle that was to help carry it through the next election. In May Councillor Armstrong had come forward with another proposal to cut council working hours.[146] This time he won the Citizens' councillors support for a discussion with the council's permanent employees on a forty-hour, five-day week, entailing the loss of four hour's pay for those on wages and a five per cent reduction in salary for those earning over £250 per annum. This plan was

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144. Times, 22 July, 1930. Sullivan made a point of approaching the newspaper to explain that he was responsible for the surplus, "brought about in consequence of savings in expenditure effected last year". One of the savings he outlined entailed delaying the start of relief works.

Nor had Elizabeth McCombs changed her views in the face of mass unemployment:

The principle of using the funds of a department like the MED was wrong ... when they dug into the funds for this, that and the other thing, they were going to wreck that department. She had wanted to reduce the domestic electricity rate, but councillors, chief amongst them Councillor Archer, had prevented her. Times, 11 August, 1931.

145. Press, 24 July, 1930. A. McLachlan, a popular local stalwart of the United Party who almost took the Riccarton Seat from Reform in 1928, stood as an Independent and defeated G.T. Thurston, secretary of the Engineers' Union.

146. Press, 27 May, 12 June, 1930.

said to enable the creation of jobs for fifty adult workers and three apprentices. The council was to revert to the old system when the employment situation improved. Labour maintained that this scheme involved wage-cutting on a grand scale, and claimed that Armstrong had been "bought over" by anti-Labour forces. With his customary gift for hyperbole, Archer declared that such proposals "must be treated as harshly and relentlessly as a threatening scourge of small-pox".[147] The council employees understandably rejected the scheme out of hand and fiercely attacked it proposer.[148]

The Citizens' council now proceeded to impose its own cuts. In February, 1931, it limited payments to relief workers to fourteen shillings a day, the same as on government works, rather than the 15/4d. of the council labourers' award.[149] Later in the month council salaries of over £600 were reduced by fifteen per cent and those over £350 by ten per cent.[150] These cuts were to save £2,505 from administration costs in order to enable twelve extra men to be employed. It was also decided that all council wages would be reduced to award rates. The United Government had announced that it would be seeking a reduction of ten per cent in all award rates a few days before.

Labour had a clear stand against wage cuts when the council's policy was put to the electoral test in May. Hayward was again the Citizens' Association candidate for

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147. Sun, 28 May, 1930. Later he compared the proposal to "the crime of murder". Times, 10 June, 1930.

148. Sun, 20, 21 June, 1930.

149. Press, 3 February, 1931.

150. Press, 17 February, 1931.

Mayor but Archer had stepped down and been replaced by Sullivan. Archer's displacement had been foreshadowed for some months.[151] His unpopularity was now well-established in wealthier areas of the city, he had repeatedly clashed with other Labour leaders over the use of MED funds and rate money for unemployment relief. Similarly, his continued conflict with deputations from the unemployed would not have improved his standing with many manual workers.[152] Particular exception had been taken to a recent quotation of his from Scripture on the theme that men must work if they wanted to eat.[153] Paradoxically, while Sullivan was definitely more conservative on policies such as council relief work, he was well-known and very popular amongst the city's labouring class.[154] Moreover, the appeal of his sympathetic personality was enhanced by the difficult times.

Citizens' Association candidates promised strict economy and rate reductions,[155] while their Labour opponents rejected wage cuts and maintained that they could reduce rates without them.[156] Sullivan was duly elected with a comfortable majority

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151. Late in 1930 one newspaper stated that it "understood" that Archer was not standing. Times, 29 November, 1930. Later it claimed that "there is said to be a strong feeling in the Labour Representation Committee that Mr Archer has had a sufficiently long term as Mayor." Times, 3 January, 1931. Elizabeth McCombs was mentioned as an alternative Labour candidate.

152. Press, 29 April, 1930; Times, 29 August, 3 September, 29 October, 1930.

153. Press, 10 September, 1930.

154. One group of labourers at Rangitata Mouth wrote to the Secretary of the local Labour Representation Committee declaring that "the time is over-ripe for our friend 'Dan', as we familiarly call him, to have the opportunity of securing this honour." Copy in Christchurch City Council, Outward Correspondence, 23 January, 1931.

155. Press, 27 April, 5 May, 1931.

156. Press, 21 April, 1 May, 1931. Sullivan assured electors that there would be a cut in rates and suggested than ten per cent might be the figure. Star, 29 April, 1931.

of three thousand after an unusually rowdy campaign in which Citizens' speakers had to contend with large groups of young hecklers - a foretaste of the problems non-Labour politicians were to face in the General Election campaign later in the year.[157] The labouring areas of the city were the key to the new mayor's success. Not only did he increase the Labour percentage of the poll in such areas, he appears to have inspired a substantial rise in the turnout there.[158] Good organisation again ensured a substantial rise in enrolments.[159] In 'middling' areas there was also some increase in the Labour percentage of the vote, but in the wealthy suburbs the swing against "the Reds" was maintained.

Sullivan's success in the mayoral contest was not, however, translated into Labour control of the city council. The party won seven seats to their opponents seven with the balance being held by A.E. Armstrong[160] and another independent, Francis Thomas Evans, a respected local schoolmaster. Amongst the Labour councillors elected were both James and Elizabeth McCombs, and the Rev. Archer.

Following the acrimony of the preceeding four years, the period between the middle of 1931 and the beginning of 1935 witnessed an extraordinary degree of agreement and co-operation between the two parties on the council. "The Coalition", as Dr. Thacker was later to term it,[161] rested

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157. Press, 7 May, 1931; Times, 6 May, 1931.

158. See Appendix

159. Press, 21 March, 1931.

160. Armstrong did not moderate his attacks on the local Labour leadership, declaring to a large election meeting in Sydenham that "they are ready to cry and shed tears with the unemployed when deputations wait on them, but when they are asked to do something decent they are found wanting". Times, 29 April, 1931.

161. Press, 23 May, 1933. Also statement by Beanland, Sun, 17 April, 1934.

on a number of principles; a sharing of administrative responsibilities, a shelving of the issue of wage cuts, a strong endeavour to reduce the rates, and a determination to keep the peace in the city. This unofficial arrangement appears to have developed progressively as leaders on both sides recognised the magnitude of the crisis facing the city and their overwhelming community of interest. It relied to a great extent on Sullivan himself; no-one else in the city possessed his combination of mana amongst working people, ability to co-operate with non-Labour sections of society, contacts with politicians and civil servants in Wellington, genuine sympathy for the distressed, and capacity to cope with an enormous and depressing workload. Perhaps the greatest evidence of the importance of his role, and tribute to his leadership, occurred in 1933 when the Citizens' Association apparently found itself without a credible Mayoral candidate - Andrews and Beanland, the foremost of the Citizens' Councillors, declined to stand against Sullivan - and only a somewhat eccentric Independent, Lancelot Charles Walker, opposed him.[162] The reappearance of the conservative James McCombs on the council may also have smoothed relations with the main opposition after the 1931 municipal election. However, it took leadership from both sides to make the arrangement work, and Andrews and

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162. An editorial critical of the leading Citizens' councillors recorded that they were "too busy". Press, 8 April, 1933. At least one businessman was prepared to announce publicly that he had voted Labour for the first time, although only in the Mayoral contest. Press, 12 May, 1933. However, Walker's rather grandiose schemes - normally anathema to Christchurch businessmen - were not sufficient disincentive to the non-labour forces of the north-west, and several booths there gave him majorities over Sullivan. Times, 11 May, 1933.

25. Elizabeth Reid McCombs, Chairman of the Christchurch City Council Electricity Committee, 1927-33, MP for Lyttelton, 1933-35.
(Official Christchurch City Council photograph, 1933.)

26. Ernest Herbert Andrews, Christchurch City Councillor 1918-1941, Mayor, 1941-50. Chairman of the Citizens' Unemployment Committee and of the Tramway Board.
A member of the city council "coalition", during the early 'thirties.
(Official Christchurch City Council photograph, 1933.)

Beanland were instrumental in maintaining co-operation. Each side had to cope with hot-headed "backbenchers" at times.

A determination to share power rather than to confine it to party members was evident from the first meeting of the new council. Citizens' councillors were elected to four chairmanships, including those of the Works and Reserves Committee, the bodies principally charged with unemployment relief. Even Armstrong was given the chair of a minor committee.[163] However, Labour was to control the 'commanding height' of the Finance and By-laws Committee through J. McCombs.

A truce on the issue of wage and salary cuts took longer to achieve. On the first of June, 1931, the same day as the Arbitration Court announced a ten per cent cut in all awards, the council restored the daily pay of its labourers to an above award rate of sixteen shillings.[164] It also decided to provide a total of £500 in back-pay to its workers for the period during which their wages had been cut. Relief workers employed by the council were to get 15/4d. a day, the general labourers' rate prior to the Arbitration Court decision, or 14/- per day if engaged on gardening work. This restoration was achieved with the support of Armstrong. However, the latter did not consider that "trade union principles" applied to salaried workers - members of the white-collar class who were generally not trade unionists. He ensured the passage of a Citizens' Association motion for the previously approved

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163. The Public Baths Committee. Beanland was made Works Committee Chairman and Anne Fraer chairman of the Reserves Committee. Times, 19 May, 1931.

164. Sun, 2 June, 1931.

cut in council salaries to be on a graduated scale from eight per cent on those between £350 and £400 p.a. to fifteen per cent on £1,000 p.a. or more.[165] This move was said to enable the employment of twenty-six extra men. Despite some sympathy for the council officers affected on the part of some Labour councillors, they were clearly not anxious to add grist to Armstrong's mill by increasing salaries which already appeared astronomical to many working people. A further motion by the rebel to introduce a forty-hour week for council workers, thereby creating sixty-two extra permanent jobs "at no extra cost to the ratepayers", received the support of only three Citizens' councillors. During the next four years there was little or no support for numerous similar moves from Armstrong.

Much of the high reputation of Christchurch's Labour city council during the depression rested on its defence of existing wage rates. While these seem to have been wise politically, its fairness was somewhat questionable. With the subsequent fall in the cost of living and the widespread use of short-time working, it turned council wage-earners into a privileged group, even more so than the employees of other local bodies. As in Labour-controlled councils in Australia,[166] this made council employment still more eagerly sought after and led to charges of corruption. Even Archer

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165. Times, 16 June, 1931. Armstrong claimed that "the ethics of Labour were to spread work over as many people as possible." This was hotly disputed by James McCombs. Despite the antipathy of Labour councillors and council officials, this cut remained in force at least until 1935. Christchurch City Council, Outward Correspondence, 24 January, 1935. However, it was limited to a maximum of ten per cent in August, 1931 (Ibid, 8 February, 1933) and averaged 7.5% (Ibid, 28 June, 1932).

166. W. Lowenstein, Weevils in the Flour, Melbourne, 1978, p.311.

expressed concern at the amount of "wire-pulling" that he believed to be taking place.[167] Furthermore, the council employees do not seem to have been enthusiastic about sharing their good fortune with their less fortunate fellow-labourers. They mocked a proposal from Sullivan that they should each contribute a shilling a week to the work of the relief depots.[168] They agreed to a voluntary collection of threepence a week instead. Yet even a shilling represented only about an eighth of the boon granted to them by the Mayor and his colleagues at the expense of the ratepayer. Perhaps many of the workers felt that their contributions to Labour Party funds were a sufficient burden.[169] These payments were possibly regarded as more in the way of insurance premiums on a higher wage-rate than charitable donations.

Some pride was also taken in the payment of award rates to relief workers by subsidising the Unemployment Board's labour allowance of 9/- per day for single men and 12/- per day for those married. However, the amount paid out in subsidy was not as substantial as its conservative opponents feared because the council rapidly shed virtually all its unmarried relief workers.[170] Although this saved money while maintaining a principle, it was rather hard on those single unemployed men, not all of them young, who were consequently

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167. Sun, 19 October, 1934.

168. Sun, 10 June, 1933.

169. City Council employees collectively provided £1,677 or 31% to the LRC's funds between 1931 and 1934. North Canterbury Labour Representation Committee, op.cit. Some may have provided more as individuals.

170. This policy was outlined in a telegram to the Mayor of Dunedin. Christchurch City Council, Outward Correspondence, 25 September, 1931. Also Sun, 11, 12 August, 1931. Times, 19 August, 1931.

forced to go into camps in the country if they could not find work with other local bodies. Moreover, the gap between the Unemployment Board's daily allowance and the amount paid by the city council further narrowed as roading work was increasingly replaced by work under the gardeners' award.[171] The rate under that award was 14/- per day. Most significantly, the wages subsidy was not paid on projects undertaken jointly with other local authorities, such as the McCormack's Bay Causeway, the largest relief scheme undertaken by the city council between 1932 and 1935. The council paid ninety per cent of the non-labour cost but provided no subsidy because the Heathcote County Council and the Sumner and Lyttelton Borough Councils made minor contributions to the cost.[172] The same principle was applied to the construction of the Estuary Road, where the city was paid for its materials and supervision by a local landowner.[173]

As with the maintenance of the city council workers' rate of pay, the fairness of the wage subsidy is debatable. The Christchurch City Council consistently employed a lower proportion of the relief workers in its urban area than that employed by the city councils in the other main centres[174] and sent large amounts of its No. 5 allocation back to the

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171. Star, 28 July, 1931.

172. To 31 March, 1935, the City Council provided £3,497 to the other authorities £345 and the Unemployment Board's £39,946. Sun, 12 April, 1935.

173. Christchurch City Council, Minutes, 16 November, 1931.

174. Sun, 18 February, 1932.

Board.[175] If the wage subsidy had been directed towards creating more work, substantially more relief workers might have been able to find jobs with the city council. This was because the local body contribution towards the cost of relief work was ordinarily less than a third of the total expense. Those workers who might have been employed within the city often had to travel long distances to their unsubsidised jobs. The time and effort required to cycle to the Waimakariri in a nor'wester or to climb Rapaki in a cold southerly was a heavy price to pay for other workers to receive a florin extra.

On the other hand, there is no guarantee that the council would have spent the amount of the wage subsidy on creating relief work, given its strong emphasis on the need to reduce the rates. Both parties had promised such a cut during the election campaign. Cr. J. McCombs declared that "the working people, in common with the larger ratepayers, were expecting a reduction in the rates this year. The whole council was pledged to a reduction in the rates, and they must endeavour to give effect to these pledges".[176] His Finance Committee cut the estimates by around twenty thousand

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175. A local member of the Unemployment Board, P.R. Climie, claimed that £3,133 had been sent back from the Christchurch area over three weeks while seven hundred men were stood-down. Times, 22 February, 1933. This was disputed (Times, 14 March, 1933) but a letter from the Christchurch Town Clerk to the Mayor of Dunedin had made clear that "there is not sufficient work for all the men not only because of the small allocations but because there is not sufficient money available by the Council for materials, insurance and the making up of the wages to 14/- a day". Christchurch City Council, Outwards Correspondence, 11 February, 1932.

176. Times, 14 July, 1931. Labour's opponents were even more considerate of the ratepayer - the Chairman of the Citizens' Association claimed that they could have doubled the cut. Times, 29 July, 1931.

pounds in order to lower the general rate by approximately ten per cent.

Like other local bodies, the city council was assisted in making these cuts by the use of relief labour paid for by the Unemployment Board. Now that a very substantial proportion of the city's labourers were unemployed and light work was available at Bottle Lake, there was less problem with "inefficient" relief workers on capital-intensive projects such as roadworks. There was also an incentive for the unemployed to work hard on city council works rather than risk suspension and transfer to more distant jobs with other local authorities which did not pay a wages subsidy.

Nevertheless, the council floated only two new loans for road reconstruction between 1931 and 1935. The total amount of loan money spent on construction work in the city over that period was only £160,105.[177] This was considerably less than the comparable expenditure by the Dunedin City Council (£206,635) and under half that spent by the Auckland and Wellington city councils at £346,317 and £333,572 respectively. The comparability of these figures is only slightly affected by the number of ad hoc local bodies in this city. Like Christchurch, Auckland and Dunedin had separate drainage boards, and the Christchurch Tramways Board did not raise any loans for construction work during this period. The Christchurch City Council's level of indebtedness, already much lower than that of the other main cities, rose by only 7.4% between 1927 and 1935.[178] This compared with 8.5% in

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177. CSO, Local Authorities Handbook, 1932-36, "Boroughs - Payments on Construction of Works Out of Loan-Money".

178. Ibid., 1928, 1936, "Boroughs - Liabilities and Assets".

Auckland, 12.4% in Wellington, and 15.6% in Dunedin. After 1933 loan conversion operations and the compulsory cut in interest rates more than off-set the additional charges on debt held overseas as a result of devaluation. However, the net saving was not used to service new loans, even at the low rates of interest prevailing by then. The council's Labour leadership actually seemed to take a pride in not borrowing. Despite some acquaintance with the work of Keynes - Sullivan made reference to his support of a "high wages" policy during 1931[179] - there was no drive to stimulate economic activity in Christchurch through public works financed by borrowing, the use of reserve funds or revenue from rates. On the contrary, James McCombs was to open Labour's municipal campaign in 1933 by announcing another "surplus", this time of £13,000.[180] Economy was the watchword for the Labour council almost as much as for conservative local authorities and the government.

The same forces that made Sullivan anxious about the maintenance of law and order in Christchurch provided Labour with its fiercest political opposition between 1931 and 1935. The municipal election of 1933 saw three parties attacking Labour from the left - Socialists, Independent Labour and Communists. The Socialists were essentially a clique around A.E. Armstrong which had captured control of the local Socialist Party, one of the original components of the New Zealand Labour Party when it was formed in 1916.[181] Their campaign dwelt heavily on allegations of favouritism and corruption in council management and they strongly supported

179. Press, 1, 4 May, 1931.

180. Sun, 20 April, 1933.

181. Press, 11 April, 1933.

Armstrong's attempts to cut council wages and salaries in order to employ more permanent workers.[182] The ILP had similar criticisms but was led by E.L. Hills, a man who had been an organiser of the unemployed during the 'twenties.[183] The Communist participation in the election was essentially propagandist, "to expose the futility of the Labour Party and the betrayal of the working-class by the Labour leaders".[184] They were especially incensed by the fact that members of the Engineers' Union had helped to break the previous season's strike in the freezing works by installing chains.[185] Communism had a strong (though far from majority) following in the local meat industry, while G.T. Thurston, the Engineers' secretary, was a Labour candidate. In the event, Armstrong was the only non-Labour candidate of the left elected, but his total of first preferences was only exceeded by two of the Labour candidates, Archer and E. McCombs.[186] Labour's other left-wing opponents did not poll heavily but the leakage of votes may well have cost the party one or two seats on the council. Only six councillors were elected on its ticket, as against seven on the Citizens'. Thacker joined Evans as a non-Labour independent. Once again Labour was in

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182. Press, 4, 6, 8 April, 1933. At one meeting several hundred people were said to have given the party's spokesmen "an attentive hearing". Times, 1 May, 1933.

183. He displaced the previous Communist leadership in 1927 and led deputations to the Mayor and various public bodies. Press, 16, 17, 18, 19 February, 5, 18 May, 1927.

184. Times, 2 May, 1933. "The Communist Party believes in shorter hours and higher pay for everyone. They did not come before citizens with any vote-catching phrases". Speech by A.J. Patterson. Press, 19 April, 1933. Free rentals and free electricity were also promised to the unemployed.

185. Ibid.

186. Times, 11 May, 1933.

a position where it could carry out radical lending and spending policies with the support of Armstrong if that was what it had wanted; but once again such policies do not appear to have been considered. They were politically unacceptable because they raised the prospect of an increase in rates.

Consequently Armstrong continued to bring forward motions for a cut in the pay of council employees and there were repeated fierce clashes between him and the Labour leadership.[187] On a number of occasions Sullivan or Archer were reduced to ringing the mayoral bell for silence while Armstrong shouted on regardless.[188] Once, when Archer was in the chair, two policemen were brought into the chamber to escort the rebellious councillor outside.[189] Early in 1935 the public gallery had to be cleared of Armstrong supporters by the police.[190] The scene was set for a particularly bitter municipal election.

This time a resurgent Citizens' Association opposed Sullivan with an eminent local surgeon and member of the elite,[191] Dr H.T.D. Acland. Unlike the two leading Citizens' councillors, Andrews and Beanland, he was not associated with Sullivan's "coalition". The Association's campaign was well organised by S.G. Holland, soon to succeed his father as M.P. for Christchurch North. In particular there was a great drive

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187. Times, 31 January, 20, 21 February, 1933. Press, 10 October, 1933. Sun, 24 April, 18 July, 11 September, 1934.

188. Sun, 19 December, 1933 (Archer), Times, 24 April, 1934 (Sullivan).

189. Sun, 26 March, 1935.

190. Sun, 26 February, 1935.

191. see p. for explanation of this term.

to register white-collar workers living at home or in rented accommodation and therefore qualifying to vote as residents.[192] This status-conscious class was growing rapidly and tended to favour anti-Labour parties. The "social" dimension of the association had also been extended, particularly for young white-collar people.[193] Even before 1935 Holland appears to have grasped clearly what was necessary to build an anti-socialist party in the society that changing technology was creating. These techniques were to be carried over into a new National Party with outstanding success. Nevertheless, the central plank of the association's platform had a familiar look; a promise to reduce rates by a further ten per cent.[194] It was admitted that this would probably involve shedding some more responsibility for the unemployed.

In a heavy turnout of around two-thirds of the vastly augmented roll,[195] Acland succeeded in reducing Sullivan's majority to less than four hundred and the Citizens' slate took twelve of the sixteen seats on the council.[196] A few months before its most crushing national victory, the Labour Party went down to defeat in its great municipal stronghold.

Labour's support appears to have been squeezed from both left and right as the contradictions inherent in the dual nature of its support were heightened by the continuation of

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192. "Due to a comprehensive canvass of city shops and offices by members of the Citizens' Association, occupiers have been placed on the roll in hundreds ... never before have there been so many occupiers' forms deposited as was the case this year ...". Star, 11 April, 1935.

193. Press, 18 July, 1931. W.S. MacGibbon was another comparatively young man who helped to revitalise the organisation. Press, 16 March, 1935.

194. Sun, 30 March, 1935.

195. Enrolments had increased by ten thousand, or almost twenty per cent. Star, 11 April, 1935.

196. Star, 9 May, 1935.

the depression in Christchurch. On the other hand, the same trio of parties as in 1933 took thousands of votes away on the left. Armstrong, now standing as an Independent Labourite, received over eleven thousand votes, but did not acquire a seat on the Council. It appears to have been the end of preferential voting that counted against him, rather than any shrinkage in his support. The seven non-Labour left-wing candidates may well have taken sufficient votes from Labour to deny it up to four councillors and therefore bring about its defeat. This would have been the effect if their twenty-six thousand votes were spread between the Labour candidates in similar proportion to those actually cast for them. Such a calculation also relies of course, on an assumption that votes cast for the rebels would have been polled anyway, and given to the Labour ticket. The turbulence preceding the election may have brought out labourers who might not have voted otherwise.

On the other hand, the Citizens' Association won substantial additional public support. Much of this can be put down to Holland's effective organisation. Nevertheless, the heavy increase in the vote in "middling" areas - suburbs containing skilled and white-collar workers rather than labourers - suggests that the association's promise of a ten per cent cut in rates may have garnered many votes.[197] These areas contained a high proportion of owner-occupied rather than rented homes. The separate election in the borough of New Brighton reinforces this view. There a recently formed Citizens' Association swept a largely pro-Labour council from

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197. See Appendix D.

office with promises of a similar reduction in rates.[198] The borough had employed hundreds of relief workers for several years, many of them temporary inhabitants of the low-rent borough, and the strain on the rates had been severe.[199]

It is also noticeable that some of the Citizens' candidates who polled remarkably well, had been strong advocates of new local projects which would take advantage of the new technology.[200] A road tunnel to Lyttelton was the one pushed most vigorously, but the development of a civil airport at Harewood, already under discussion for some years, was also given a high priority.[201] There was even some public airing of a plan for a seaplane port on the Estuary.[202] As with Labour in 1927, the mantle of technological progress appeared to rest much more with one party than the other. And once again there was a widespread and rising interest in the possibilities for such progress. Unemployment might still be the direct concern of six thousand working men and their families, but those who had suffered much less from the depression had declared it ended a year or more earlier. The youthful amongst them were looking impatiently to the future. On the other hand, the Labour ticket was dominated by individuals closely associated with unions representing

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198. Sun, 28 March, 1935; Times, 9 May, 1935. E. Smith, the successful mayoral candidate, was obliged to deny at one stage that he wished to "kick the unemployed out of New Brighton". Times, 2 May, 1935.

199. In 1933 and 1934 the borough found work for over three hundred men. The city, with over ten times the number of ratepayers, employed a maximum of eight or nine hundred during this time. Press, 30 April, 1935.

200. At least three of the successful Citizens' candidates - T. Milliken, G. Jamieson, and F. Sargent, were closely associated with the Automobile Association. Press, 16 March, 1935.

201. Press, 30 March, 1935; Sun, 27 April, 1935.

202. Sun, 31 May, 1935.

local body employees, particularly the General Labourers' Union.[203] They held little appeal to the growing army of white-collar workers who were looking to a bright new technological era. Furthermore, their presence on the ticket appeared to give further substance to Armstrong's charges that the Labour administration was a benefit for those lucky enough to work for the council.

Labour was beaten largely by the problem of looking after the interests of both their labouring and ratepaying constituencies when both felt they had been hard-pressed by economic circumstances. In a city where ratepayers and their spouses undoubtedly formed a majority of the adult population,[204] increases in property taxation to assist a minority - many of them not ratepayers - risked electoral defeat. Conversely promises to reduce the rate substantially, even at the expense of such a minority, could command widespread support. This did not apply in national policies as yet. Most working men paid no income tax at all[205] - hence the strong protest from trade unions at the imposition of the "wages tax" to finance

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203. Four of the sixteen Labour candidates were on the executive of the GLU; M. Howard, W. Hickey, A. Beauchamp, and J. Carey. Two others, J. Mathison and H. Denton were associated with the Tramway Union. E. Parlane was secretary of the Drivers' Union, and his wife was also standing. R. Macfarlane was a prominent union organiser, particularly amongst the unskilled and semi-skilled. Four of the others were employed as union officials. Only Archer, T. Butterfield and G. Manning had largely escaped labelling as "unionists". Times, 1 February, 1935. The latter three were amongst the five highest polling Labour candidates. Press, 9 May, 1935.

204. A total of 25,580 ratepayers were recorded for Christchurch City in 1926-27. CSO, Local Authorities Handbook, 1928, p.213. The census gave an adult population for that year of 51,752. Census, 1926, vol. 3, p.33, 37.

205. Only 18,434 wage or salary earners paid income tax in 1925-26 (NZYB, 1929, p.777), less than five per cent of those placing themselves in that category in the 1926 Census. Census, 1926, vol. 9, p.43. Most paying tax would have been salary-earners.

the work of the Unemployment Board.[206] It could still be assumed that proposals to spend more money on public works and social welfare would be financed by the wealthy and those on higher salaries, a clear minority of the population. But the spread of incomes in New Zealand was already relatively narrow,[207] just as the spread of property ownership was comparatively wide. With the growth of the welfare state and other activities of central government, the potential constituency of non-Labour parties was to expand again. More and more working people, particularly the skilled and self-employed, were to find themselves faced with an annual bill for income tax very like that for their rates. The political genius of Sidney Holland was not the only hint of future trouble for Labour in the defeat of 1935.

In September of the following year the new council cut the number of relief workers it employed from over 350 to 250, one hundred of them to be working full-time.[208] Although the total of registered unemployed in Christchurch had just reached its depression peak,[209] there was comparatively little protest at this move. It was, after all, only the continuation of a national policy which had developed since the introduction of sustenance pay in 1933. Most local bodies had responded well initially to the No. 5 Scheme, under which central government provided the total labour cost of their relief works for the first time. However, as mass unemployment

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206. Christchurch Tramway Employees' Union, Minutes, 10 April, 1932; Sun, 13 September, 1934.

207. H. Lydall, The Structure of Earnings, Oxford, 1968, p.235.

208. Christchurch City Council, Outward Correspondence, 22 September, 1936.

209. The peak was 6,745, recorded on 1 August, 1936. CSO, Monthly Abstract of Statistics, 22 December, 1936, p.28.

became prolonged and many workers came to resist the low wages provided by going slow, local bodies increasingly resented the need to find employment for a vast number of unemployed men. They frequently used these workers to do unskilled maintenance jobs which would otherwise be done by regular employees, often with the assistance of machinery.[210] Nevertheless, the cost and organisation required to find employment for so many men hindered the resumption of work on local government projects such as new roading, waterworks and sewerage. These demanded large expenditure on materials and machinery. They also needed qualified and careful supervision, and an efficient labour force. Many local bodies had acquired labour-saving machinery in the 'twenties which could be used to carry out such projects economically and speedily. Consequently there was a progressive splitting up of the relief workforce following the advent of sustenance. Individual local bodies and government departments came to agreements with the Unemployment Board to employ limited numbers of the fittest unemployed on full-time work in return for a much higher wages subsidy. The remainder of the unemployed was gradually shifted onto sustenance pay. Thus local bodies were able to carry out major capital works economically while being released from the cost and trouble of finding or making work for reluctant part-time workers.

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210. The City Engineer reported that the No. 5 Scheme men "have been on so long now that the council's work is becoming to a certain extent dependent on them". The Reserves Department expressed a similar view. Christchurch City Council, Minutes, 10 August, 1936. The Waimairi County Council claimed that it was able to reduce its rates by 25% in 1931 "owing to the amount of work done by the unemployed". Times, 31 March, 1931. It cut down on the amount of machinery in use. Times, 5 May, 1931. True to form, the Riccarton Borough Council abandoned the No. 5 Scheme entirely in 1934 when told by the Unemployment Board to cease using unemployed labour to man machines carrying out its regular work. Press, 30 March, 1935.

In Christchurch's case, many of the full-time relief workers were placed on the construction of Harewood Airport, a job undertaken with extensive use of earthmoving machinery.[211] It had been planned originally to provide work for three hundred men for three years, apparently under No. 5 Scheme conditions.[212] It was the Labour government which came to the new arrangement with the Citizens' council to employ fewer men and more machinery.

The Christchurch City Council's adoption of full-time relief work was decidedly belated - the Auckland council had left the No. 5 Scheme completely almost two years earlier.[213] In October, 1934, it had selected five hundred relief workers for full-time employment at standard rates of pay, and allowed the rest to go onto sustenance. Half the retained workers were placed on a large new drainage project involving the expenditure of £116,000 in loan-money. During the winter of 1935 the newly elected Labour city council in Dunedin transferred eight hundred men onto standard wages.[214] To finance this it utilised £32,000 in trading department renewal funds, drawn principally from electricity sales. Such a spendthrift attitude was beyond its Christchurch counterpart; early in 1935 that Labour council was holding out the heady prospect of a debt-free city by 1955.[215] It was stated with pride and confidence that "it is unlikely that any fresh loan monies

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211. C.M. Brown and Co. won the private tender for much of the airport work and made extensive use of Caterpillar earthmoving machinery supplied by Gough, Gough and Hamer. Christchurch City Council, Outward Correspondence, 8, 22 December, 1936.

212. Star-Sun, 22 September, 1936.

213. Times, 13 October, 1934.

214. McDonald, op.cit., p.351.

215. Sun, 25 March, 1935.

will be required for a considerable time". There was no suggestion of launching into a new phase of the 1928 roading plan even though the city's mileage of first-grade roading continued to lag behind that of Auckland or Wellington.[216] During its last year in power the Labour Christchurch City Council spent a total of £15,563 out of existing loan-monies on construction.[217] The conservative councils in Auckland, Wellington and Dunedin spent £90,670, £66,115 and £56,764 respectively. Furthermore, they all drew more funds from the Unemployment Board than Christchurch, almost twice as much in the case of Wellington.[218] Nor had the representatives of the working-class frittered away the city's reserve funds on providing employment for the jobless or stimulating purchasing power. By the end of the 1934-35 year the MED's reserve stood at over £186,000, well up on the paltry £125,435 of 1931.[219] The progressives' mirage of a municipal hydro-electric power station at some time after the depression now seemed much closer - as close as it would ever get.

Not that the new Citizens' council was less conservative. On the contrary, its ten per cent cut in rates restricted the scope for major spending on construction still further. Spending of loan-money on construction during 1935-36 increased by over a third in each of the other main centres, but in Christchurch it was reduced by forty per cent to a mere £9,397.[220] MED reserves increased by almost fifty thousand

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216. CSO, Local Authorities Handbook, 1936, p.134-35.

217. Ibid, p.122-23.

218. Ibid, p.112-3.

219. Christchurch City Council, Balance Sheet and Statements, 1931, 1935.

220. CSO, op.cit., 1937, p.126-27.

pounds within the first year of the new city council.[221]

It is difficult to be precise about the reasons for the extra-ordinary financial conservatism in Christchurch. Perhaps the city's comparative economic decline was exerting a powerful influence. After all, the period of Tommy Taylor's dominance in local government coincided with Christchurch's heyday as the dominion's great manufacturing centre. More likely, it was a measure of the outstanding success in Christchurch of the skilled working-class ideal of home ownership. Householders on relatively low incomes, often paying off mortgages, feel the effect of an increase in rates more harshly than the rich or those who can pass on such costs to tenants or customers. Sympathy for the unemployed, for council employees or for spending to "increase purchasing power" tended to give way before the prospect of a real rise in the rate bill.

Technological change and its effects exerted at least as great an influence as the depression over the operations of the Christchurch City Council between 1926 and 1936. Between 1926 and 1932 the problems and opportunities created by motor transport and electricity supply greatly augmented the council's permanent staff and its spending. New demands for improved and more extensive roading, electricity connections, town-planning, traffic control, and motor and electrical machinery all consumed increased amounts of time and money. From 1932 to 1936 the influence of the depression slowed growth in areas of new technology, particularly roading, but the MED continued to expand its operations and its reserves. Moreover, the setback to expenditure on aspects of the new technology

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221. Christchurch City Council, op.cit., 1936.

appears to have been more severe and prolonged in Christchurch than in the other main centres. In terms of the workload on the city council the burden of depression problems tended to fall mainly on the mayor himself, a small number of administrative staff who helped to supervise his charitable empire, and the overseers and paymasters who were involved in relief work.[222]

Contrary to the traditional assumption, the Labour-dominated city council in Christchurch did not eschew retrenchment during the depression. This was true even of the period when Labour had a clear majority. Between 1927 and 1929 the Christchurch City Council spent £65,107 on unemployment relief, compared with £91,622 by Auckland City and £125,223 by Wellington City.[223] Even the provision of uncut award rates of pay to council employees and relief workers was not particularly equitable or expensive. In practice it meant that fewer of the city's unemployed received work within the city itself. The socialists of Christchurch had roughly as much success as their conservative counterparts elsewhere in keeping down the rates. In his first speech of the 1935 municipal election campaign, Sullivan claimed that "in Christchurch alone amongst the large centres we have reduced the rates".[224] Figures he had produced on the same theme a few months earlier suggested that the gap between Christchurch's low rate per £1,000 capital value and that of the other main

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222. Clergymen, local Church organisations, religious social service groups and unemployed workers paid under the No. 5 Scheme staffed the relief depots as well as providing much of the material distributed.

223. Press, 27 February, 1930.

224. Sun, 3 April, 1935.

centres had actually increased (in the case of Auckland) or narrowed only marginally since 1927.[225] They were actually more successful in avoiding borrowing.[226] Such policies catered for the interests of the ratepayers in the city, most of them working people. Sullivan had set this policy at the beginning of his period in power - "the great majority of the ratepayers are workers and they would have to find any increase in rates" - therefore there could be no "loose or extravagant" spending to employ all the unemployed.[227] To the extent that it permitted reductions in electricity charges and the accumulation of vast reserve funds, the restriction of council spending on the unemployed encouraged the greater use of electrical appliances. Decreased charges benefitted those who could afford electric heating connections and equipment, largely the better-off. The build-up of reserves gave them the possibility of security against increased state electricity charges in the future. Many of those who were gaining in this way were progressive professionals, white-collar workers and capitalists, the technologically aware Fabian fringe of the Labour Party. In the process of satisfying these overlapping groups the interests of the unemployed were neglected. Unstinting personal charitable efforts, especially by Sullivan, tended to be outweighed officially by concern for present and future ratepayers and electricity consumers. The result of the 1935 municipal elections suggests that this is what a majority

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225. Times, 24 December, 1934.

226. See above p. 178-79.

227. Times, 31 May, 1927

of politically active people in Christchurch wanted - the Labour Council was just not conservative enough. One council officer later described how the mayor had had to be restrained from giving his jacket away to applicants for assistance.[228] An extra farthing on the rates would have done much more to help the unemployed than Dan Sullivan's entire wardrobe. But that was not possible; though personally generous to a fault he was still a democratic politician.

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228. Told to R. Greenaway by J. Eames, retired Assistant Town Clerk, in 1976, and passed on to author.

CHAPTER EIGHT

DISORDER

The outbreaks of public violence in the main centres of New Zealand during 1932 have tended to become a symbol of the importance of the depression in the nation's history. They have sometimes been regarded as so foreign to such a settled country as to presage a civil war between capital and labour.[1]

Judging by the traditional account of Christchurch's experience of the depression, the city does not present a fair test of this proposition. By far the most frequent reference to Christchurch in general histories concerns its alleged lack of violence in comparison to the other main centres.[2] This local peacefulness is usually put down to the wise and careful leadership of a Labour-dominated city council and generous public support for relief depots. Mayor Sullivan himself cultivated this image of his beloved city assiduously, both locally and in Wellington. An interview given shortly after the announcement of his retirement from the mayoralty furnishes a typical example;

> But that our city has come through without the disastrous outbursts by a greatly suffering people, such as those experienced in Auckland, Wellington and in a much minor [sic] degree,

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1. W. Sutch, The Quest for Security in New Zealand, 1840-1966, Wellington, p.130; G. Brown, The International Economic Position of New Zealand, Chicago, 1946, p.76; K. Sinclair, Walter Nash, Auckland, 1976, p.100.

2. Ibid, p.136; B. Roth and J. Hammond, Toil and Trouble, Wellington, 1981, p.126; W. Scotter, A History of Canterbury, Vol.3: 1876-1950, Christchurch, 1965, p.380.

> Dunedin, is overwhelmingly due to the unparalleled generosity of our Christchurch people in subscribing money to assist those in distress and especially those who sacrificed themselves in the work of assisting me to raise and distribute the funds.[3]

However, this image is open to considerable question. In particular, there was significant unrest leading to violence and the destruction of property in Christchurch at various times between 1929 and 1935, notably during the angry autumn of 1932. As in the other main cities, groups of the unemployed fought with police. One man died as a result of injuries sustained in such a fracas, another in an altercation over a relief work strike. "Specials" were enrolled in Christchurch and were put into action against rioters. The fact that these events were given the focus of a strike by tramway workers has tended to mask their essential similarities to the disorders elsewhere. There also appears to have been at least as much violent unrest in Christchurch as in the other main centres during the years 1930-31 and 1932-35.

Furthermore, Labour's control of the government of the city during most of this period actually posed some special difficulties for the maintenance of order. This was especially so after the party had promoted mass demonstrations of its own throughout the country during 1932. Although devoted to keeping the peace and preserving property, the local Labour leadership could not align themselves publicly with the government and simply ban all open-air meetings and marches. Such action would have offended Labour principles and might have alienated many working people. It raised the

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3. Press, 11 February, 1936.

possibility of further defections like that of the rebellious Independent Labour Councillor A.E. Armstrong, and a serious drop in electoral support. Yet the party wished to keep control of public agitations, both to forestall possible violence and to limit opportunities for the Communist Party and other radical groups to win support away from Labour. The methods used by the Labour leadership to confound its opponents were often devious and extended far beyond the provisioning of relief depots.

Nor were those depots always an asset in maintaining the peace. They were actually well-organised and were particularly valuable in supplementing the hospital board's assistance especially to the destitute who were elderly or ill. However, on a number of occasions, most notably during 1935, they were actually the focus of violent agitation.

The danger was not one of revolution but of an outbreak of rioting directed primarily against property, as in the other main centres. Problems arose in those cities where large gatherings of mainly unskilled working class people were frustrated in some way and were then able to escape the control of the police because of weight of numbers or because the constabulary were preoccupied.[4] In Dunedin trouble developed following the closure of a relief depot; in Auckland and Wellington when large demonstrations were kept waiting - and in the former case were provoked by a police over-reaction - and an unruly element found there were no policemen between themselves and the shops of the city. The Communist Party,

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4. R. Noonan, The Riots of 1932: A Study of Social Unrest in Auckland, Wellington, and Dunedin, unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Auckland, 1969, passim.

like the Labour Party, condemned such outbreaks of what it termed "hooliganism".[5] However, both parties greatly increased the chances of these incidents occurring by their efforts to mobilise large crowds of workers and the unemployed. Nor were the fiery speeches of some party leaders calculated to promote public calm.

There had been some political agitation amongst the unemployed in Christchurch from at least as early as 1926. Much of it was led by members of the local Communist Party, of whom the most prominent were H. Dunkley and S.F. Fournier. The latter was a particularly well-known figure, a stone-mason of French extraction with a penchant for colourful bombast.[6] Members of the Communist Party had been active in the trade union movement during the mid-'twenties, and some, including Fournier, had worked alongside the leaders of the Labour Party during the strikes of 1913 and the wartime anti-conscription campaign. At least one large local union, the Canterbury General Labourers', had withdrawn its support from the Labour Party in protest against the total exclusion of communists from party membership in 1925.[7] But Labour supporters were generally successful in reducing communist influence during the late 'twenties. In 1929, Fred Cooke, a Labour city councillor and trade union secretary in

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5. Letter from Organising Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of New Zealand to the Christchurch Local Party Committee, 25 May, 1935, Jack Locke Papers, Item 16, Part 2.

6. "Sidney Huguenot Fournier d'Albe", in New Zealand Monthly Review, Vol.1, December, 1960 - January, 1961, p.21. Herbert Dunkley was also a skilled man and an immigrant - a fitter who had worked for some time for the New Zealand Railways Department before being dismissed. Times, 2 March, 1928.

7. Press, 18 June, 1926. There was also support from the Trades and Labour Council, the Christchurch East Labour Party Branch and the Christchurch Printing Trades Union. Times, 26 February, 1926.

Christchurch described the local communists as

> Just a bit of loose fluff on the surface of the ocean...a few years ago there were a few of them more or less prominent in the trade unions, but their activities at the present time are nil. They have been gradually weeded out and...are not receiving any support, unless from a section of the unemployed.[8]

The communists had even had difficulty in establishing their leadership amongst the unemployed. The latter were generally desperate for work and looked to businessmen and the city council to provide it.[9] Consequently they were quite ready to reject Fournier and Dunkley when first Owen and then Mayor Archer refused to co-operate with them.[10] Archer and the non-communist leaders of the unemployed forestalled a communist move to hold demonstrations during the visit of the Duke of York to the city in 1927.[11]

There were only minor threats to public order between 1926 and 1930. Dunkley and Fournier were involved in confrontations at the hospital board and at the relief depot set

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8. Star, 10 April, 1929.

9. In 1922 and from the beginning of 1926 much relief work at award rates was organised by R.B. Owen, a Christchurch retailer. He was the main force behind the Citizens' Unemployment Committee (CUC) which raised funds for this purpose. One of his main interests was in "beautifying" the city, especially along the Avon, and most of the CUC's money was spent on such work. Owen gained the nickname "River Bank" as a consequence.

10. Owen took strong exception to some communist talk at a meeting with the unemployed. Press, 18 June, 1926. The city's leading trade union secretaries were also disturbed - not least by requests for a dole rather than work. They formed a Trades Hall Unemployment Committee (THUC) almost exclusively of union officials to act as "the mouthpiece of the unemployed". A few days later Owen objected to Fournier's being in charge of distributing goods to the unemployed at Trades Hall - "dishing out bread and jam and other goods and making communistic sandwiches out of them". The THUC hastened to placate him and Archer summed up their decision - "the objectionable creatures will be removed". Press, 17, 25, 26 June, 1926. Dunkley and Fournier were rejected as leaders by an unemployed meeting because they were seen as "detrimental to securing work". Press, 15 February, 1927.

11. Press, 21, 22 February; 8 March, 1927.

up under the auspices of the private Citizens' Unemployment Committee.[12] There were also some fisticuffs between rival leaders of the unemployed.[13] In 1928 a member of a deputation to Archer talked of the possibility of the unemployed breaking shop windows and helping themselves "as had been done in other towns".[14]

The first substantial outbreak of trouble occurred towards the end of 1930 and it was strongly communist-inspired. During the previous year the Communist International had declared western Labour parties and associated moderate trade union movements to be "social fascist".[15] They were alleged to be diverting the working class from its revolutionary role and thus propping up the capitalist system. Hence it was seen as the duty of the communist parties throughout the world to attack such reformists unmercifully in order to expose their true nature and role.

As the dominion's foremost Labour city, with a Labour mayor and Labour city council, Christchurch was a prime target for this campaign in New Zealand. The first substantial public evidence of the new communist offensive came with a series of verbal and physical attacks on non-communist trade union leaders.[16] Most of the action centred on a go-slow

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12. One cause of confrontation was that Councillor A.E. Herbert, who was in charge of the depot, initially refused assistance to the Fourniers and Dunkleys on instructions from Trades Hall. Apparently the two agitators had refused offers of work. Press, 4 April, 1927. See also Press, 19 March, 5 July, 1927; Times, 5 October, 1927.

13. Star, 31 March, 1927.

14. Press, 25 May, 1928.

15. H. Seton-Watson, From Lenin to Krushchev, New York, 1960, p.107.

16. There was an incident in July, 1929, when the police were called to evict Fournier from Trades Hall in accordance with the union secretaries' previous decision to keep him out. Press, 24 July, 1929. This may have been an attempt to "confront" the Labour union leadership.

organised in a number of South Island freezing-works during the first quarter of 1930. According to the secretary of the Canterbury Freezing Workers' Union, H.C. Revell, the action was "unofficial" and was being directed by communists who were organised into a Propaganda Committee to gain support for their ticket in the forthcoming elections to the New Zealand Freezing Workers' Federation.[17] He claimed that the campaign was greatly assisted by an influx of Australian seasonal workers. However, local works withdrew from the dispute following an ultimatum from the freezing companies and strong opposition from union leaders. At Islington the majority against continued action was 320 to 20.[18] The Canterbury nominee on the militant ticket was subsequently defeated by 105 votes to 1125.[19] But before the dispute ended, both Revell and C.E. Baldwin, secretary of the New Zealand Workers' Union, had been assaulted.[20]

About the same time a rather grandiosely named Organised Unemployed and Relief Workers' Committee was formed in Christchurch, containing a number of communists.[21] It directed increasing criticism at Labour trade union leaders, set up its own relief depot and collected public donations in competition with the official Citizens' Unemployment Committee. At the beginning of September they directed a strong campaign against the hospital board's policy of demanding work in return for rations.[22] B. O'Donnell, a leader of the OURWC who had recently arrived from Dunedin, claimed that the

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17. Press, 26 August, 1929; Sun, 17 April, 1930.
18. Sun, 17 April, 1930.
19. Star, 2 May, 1930.
20. Star, 16, 19 April, 1930; Sun, 17 April, 1930.
21. Times, 4 April, 6, 10, 13 May; Press, 27 May, 3 June, 1930.
22. Times, 10, 12 September, 1930; Press, 11 September, 1930.

unemployed in that city had gained large quantities of goods from the Otago Hospital Board by approaching it "en masse". That afternoon fifty of the unemployed marched three-deep from the Government Labour Bureau to the hospital. Following threats to help themselves, they were ejected forcibly by the police.

The possibility of violent action increased again a few weeks later with the arrival of a young communist from Wellington named A.F. Marshall.[23] By the middle of November he was secretary of the local branch of the Communist Party and of a newly formed Unemployed Workers' Union, established to displace the OURWC which had become side-tracked into the irrelevancies of providing food and work for the unemployed.[24] Marshall aimed his attacks directly at the Labour Party, describing it as a "third capitalist party".[25] Ironically, it was Archer, the great supporter of more council spending on the unemployed, who bore the brunt of these attacks. The Mayor was an irascible individual, unprepared to suffer such insolence, and he repeatedly called in the police to remove the irritant.[26]

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23. The first report of his presence resulted from a speech he gave in Victoria Square - the Christchurch's Hyde Park. Press, 4 October, 1930. A letter from the city council addressed him as secretary of the Canterbury District Committee of the Communist Party of New Zealand on 15 October. At his trial in December he described himself as secretary of the local UWM as well. Times, 13 December, 1930.

24. They had formed a company entitled the Unemployed Relief Association Ltd. which intended to operate a fishing launch, a depot and a cafe. Its Managing Director, Herbert Barnsley, was an accountant but had recently faced a charge of theft from Dannevirke. Press, 22 May, 31 October, 1930.

25. Press, 29 October, 1930.

26. Times, 29 October, 2, 3 December, 1930.

By December Marshall was holding meetings in Cathedral Square in defiance of the by-law requiring council permission.[27] He talked of forming a "Workers' Defence Corps" so that "if the police attack us then, we shall be able to deal with them".[28] Four days later there was a fierce struggle at the Municipal Chambers after Archer had once again ordered Marshall out.[29] The detachment of police present drew their batons and some were knocked down in a rush by a section of the crowd. It was estimated that over a hundred of the unemployed were present. Later the same day there was an attempt to prevent the eviction of a local communist. However, whereas the crowd called upon to help the evicted man was forced to travel out to the scene on foot or bicycle, the police were able to use motor transport. They confronted the late arrivals in force from within the property.

The next day Archer announced that permission would not be granted for any processions because they interfered with traffic, but "as far as the squares are concerned, I do not think meetings there should be stopped altogether, provided they are not used for seditious purposes".[30] Sullivan claimed in his regular newspaper column that North Island 'papers were "making the most" of the agitation in Christchurch.[31] Evidently the city had become the national centre of unrest.

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27. Times, 4, 8 December, 1930.
28. Press, 6 December, 1930.
29. Times, 10 December, 1930.
30. Times, 11 December, 1930.
31. Ibid.

The police arrested Marshall and four other members of the unemployed on the following day. The young Wellingtonian was detained during a meeting in which he had claimed that "the mayor is a scab and a fascist, and we should run him out of town".[32] He received six months hard labour for those "insulting words", for organising a procession without Archer's permission and for inciting lawlessness by encouraging the attempt to prevent the eviction. Two other young members of the unemployed received three months hard labour, one of them for assaulting a police sergeant.

Following this temporary loss of a number of their leaders, the local militants moderated their campaign. Nevertheless, threats of physical violence continued. For example, one member of a deputation to the CUC declared that "the men are getting restless, and if you value the peace of the city you will do as I ask".[33] A strike of relief workers, called in April, gained little response.[34] Similarly, a campaign against eviction does not seem to have enjoyed any great success.[35]

The most violent incident during 1931 occurred on the First of August. That date had been designated a day of

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32. The policeman listening to Marshall drew on his own limited political experience and interpreted the term as "pacifist". It was, however, the use of the word "scab" that led to Marshall's conviction. The latter's choice of language appears to betray the influence of the cinema - was the Rev. Archer to be offered the option of a shootout? Times, 12, 13 December; Press, 12, 13 December, 1930.

33. Sun, 3 February, 1931.

34. Star, 1, 6, 15, 22 April, 1931.

35. During March, 1932, however, several hundred unemployed did succeed in persuading F. Archbold to give a tenant a month's grace when they paraded outside the former's furniture warehouse and factory. Press, 30 March, 1932. The tenant had apparently earnt the goodwill of the unemployed by carrying relief strike pickets in his car. Star, 29 March, 1932. An Anti-Eviction Committee had previously been formed but may not have been involved in this incident. Sun, 2 March, 1932.

demonstrations against war and fascism by communist parties throughout the world. A request for permission to hold a march was sent to the city council from the appropriate front organisation in Christchurch, but was rejected by the Labour-dominated Finance and By-laws Committee. This refusal was later variously ascribed to the "rudeness" of the application, its informality, lack of a signature and the possibility of disruption to Saturday morning traffic.[36] However, there must remain a strong suspicion that the decision was at least partly a reaction to the anti-Labour politics of the marchers. Replying to a letter of protest about the events of the First of August from the Auckland Unemployed Workers' Movement (UWM), Archer quoted with indignation one of the proposed banners for the march as reading "No Trust in the Labour Party". He maintained that

> the action of the police was not, as you seem to suppose, an attempt 'to break up a working class demonstration', but was simply a clash between the police and the communists of the city. What your attitude towards communists is I do not know, neither do I know whether they have caused any trouble in the city of Auckland, but they have made themselves a great nuisance here, and have more than once brought themselves into conflict with the police.[37]

The major responsibility for the violence which occurred must lie with the tactics adopted by the police. The attempt to "test the by-law" by public defiance, a tactic used by some Labour leaders in their younger days, was widely advertised. One newspaper noted an announcement of the march chalked on the pavement outside the Labour Bureau during the previous week.[38] Furthermore, it was held on a Saturday, the

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36. Star, 3 April, 1931.

37. Archer to R.L. Lucas, secretary, Auckland UWM, Christchurch City Council, Outward Correspondence, 27 August, 1931.

38. Star, 3 April, 1931. Also Sun, 25 July, 1931; Times, 4 August, 1931.

busiest shopping day of the week. Consequently there were some hundreds, perhaps thousands, of by-standers when the small band of marchers collected outside the Christchurch railway station, their advertised starting-point.[39] Yet only four policemen attended, and instead of merely observing proceedings, they attempted to prevent the march by force. In an incident not dissimilar to that which sparked the main Auckland riot in the following year, a policeman knocked A.F. Marshall off the chair from which he was trying to address the gathering. Members of the crowd then set upon the small band of police and beat them up so badly that some were still being treated for their injuries eight months later.[40] The two or three dozen idealists of the Committee Against War and Fascism persevered with their protest, marching down Colombo Street followed by a large and inquisitive crowd. Many were arrested and the rest dispersed by a much larger group of police as they approached Cathedral Square.

A total of only eleven men were charged as a result of this incident, almost all of them communists or on the fringe of the party. However, the police appear to have concentrated on such persons and even the participation in the procession of a number of them was doubtful.[41] None was charged with assault despite the fact that the policemen attacked could identify them on other charges. Evidently it

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39. Sun, 1 August, 1931; Times, 3 August, 1931.

40. Star, 15 April, 1932. One bystander maintained with some justice that "the way in which the man was handled started the whole row. If the police had used tact it might not have happened. It was like throwing a match into a barrel of gunpowder." (Times, 5 August, 1931)

41. Times, 21 August, 1931.

had been non-party members in a genuinely incensed crowd that had carried out the assault.

A dramatic change in the relationship between the local Labour and Communist Parties appeared to develop within weeks of these events. By the end of August H.T. Armstrong M.P. was speaking at a meeting of the UWM presided over by J.A. McCullough, a Labour stalwart, but including other speakers who had previously taken up the cry of "social fascism".[42] A fortnight later Armstrong and McCullough were again prominent at a meeting of several hundred unemployed in Victoria Square to protest at the Unemployment Board's proposals for single men's camps.[43] R.M. Macfarlane, a youthful trade unionist, former Labour city councillor and a rising star in the local party, took part in the meeting as a member of the Socialist Party, one of the components of the New Zealand Labour Party. He proposed "a united effort against the attempt to reduce the standard of living to below the pre-war level of indentured coolie labour". This proposal was seconded by C.F. Riley, a local communist, and Macfarlane was joined by A.B. Blance, a very active member of the Communist Party. Blance and Macfarlane declared that socialists and communists were now prepared to speak from the same platforms.

The reasons for this rapproachement are obscure. Certainly the Commintern had not yet changed its policy to one of promoting a "United Front". Possibly there was a local arrangement. At this time Mayor Sullivan was going to

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42. Times, 31 August, 1931. It is possible that this rapproachement was influenced by the decision of the local Communist Party on 18 August to contest three Labour seats in the coming general election. Labour would thus have faced the prospect of having its own vote divided at the very time when its opponents' was united. Sun, 20 August, 1931.

43. Star, 14 September, 1931.

some lengths to help the individuals imprisoned after the clash of the First of August. He telegraphed the Minister of Prisons to allow one of them, described in the wire as "Riley Communist", to be visited by the secretary of the UWM.[44] The latter, H.E. Barnsley, was described in the message as "reliable despite a conviction against him", and does not appear to have been a member of the Communist Party. It is possible that he had agreed to help to persuade all members of the UWM to suspend their attacks on the Labour Party. While earning the gratitude of those in prison Sullivan was also able to thin the ranks of Labour's opponents. For example, he referred one individual to a local member of the Unemployment Board on the basis that he was now prepared to accept work in the country.[45] Another was recommended to the local Labour Department for work because it was "in the interests of the city...to separate him from those with whom he has been associated".[46]

A growing militancy within the Labour Party, particularly amongst the leaders of the unskilled unions which supported it, gave communists and labourites a lot of rhetoric in common. The party of revolution may well have felt in danger of being outflanked when a strong Labour supporter such as C.E. Baldwin of the New Zealand Workers' Union called for

> a bold front, even if it comes to revolution. It is no use revolting in small coteries. Get together, and if a revolution must come, revolt as one man at the one time, and throughout New Zealand. A revolution must come soon.[47]

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44. Christchurch City Council, Outward Correspondence, 8 July, 1931.

45. Ibid., 12 September, 1931.

46. Ibid., 21 October, 1931.

47. Times, 16 September, 1931.

There was talk from Reform and United M.P.'s of postponing the approaching election, and the two anti-Labour parties were clearly moving towards fusion. Despite widespread discontent at the recent wage-cuts, it looked as if Labour would be denied power once again. Worse still, the labour movement might well find itself confronted with a government containing its arch-enemy, J.G. Coates. In that case the whole system of industrial arbitration seemed doomed and further wage-cuts inevitable. Overseas it appeared that the Labour parties in Britain and Australia were to be deprived of government at a time when their support should have been at its height. The Forces of Capital appeared capable of manipulating democracy everywhere.

The next outbreak of public violence in Christchurch probably involved youthful Labour supporters as much as young communists. On 23 November an election meeting was held for the Prime Minister, George Forbes, at the Caledonian Hall.[48] The police appear to have been successful in restricting entry largely to government supporters, despite the manufacture of a number of fake tickets. Just as the meeting was about to begin a concerted rush was made on the doors by a large section of the crowd of two or three thousand waiting outside. Iron gates were forced open and the detachment of twenty-five policemen guarding the building felt compelled to use their batons. After the meeting the Prime Minister left by a side-entrance and was obliged to climb over the back-fence.[49] These events led one prominent

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48. Press, Star, Sun, Times, 24 November, 1931. A few stones were thrown outside Coates' meeting two days later. Sun, 26 November, 1931.

49. Times, 24 November, 1931.

businessman to call, unsuccessfully, for the formation of a "blackshirt" organisation to protect political meetings.[50] The fact that no UWM leaders were arrested in the days which followed suggests that they were not prominent in the attempt to storm the hall as they were now well-known to the police and would almost certainly have been singled out.

The first half of 1932 was to be one of the most turbulent in Christchurch's history as well as in those of the other main centres. Labour's defeat at the elections appeared to foreshadow further attacks on workers' organisations and their standard of living as Coates and the Reform Party exerted their influence over government. At this time the New Zealand Labour Party executive decided to promote a programme of demonstrations throughout the dominion.[51] A major aim appears to have been to make the government fearful of the consequences of introducing further "anti-worker" legislation.[52] References to the possibility of a revolution began to sprinkle the speeches of some Labour politicians, notably those of John A Lee. Just before the Christmas of 1931 a new organisation called the Canterbury Industrial Association was formed from amongst the more militant Labour trade unions in Christchurch.[53] Its aim appears to have been to promote concerted action, probably in the form of a general strike, in the event of further wage-cuts. In February the

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50. Star, 26 November, 1931. Thacker claimed to be the "prime mover" behind the suggestion (Sun, 26 November, 1931) but it is unlikely that he would have been described as a "prominent businessman".

51. E. Olssen, John A. Lee, Dunedin, 1977, p.56-58.

52. Ibid., p.56, and remark by Semple to a meeting at Sydenham Park that he did not advocate violence "but would say that there was a breaking point beyond which people could not be driven". Times, 27 June, 1932.

53. Star, 23 December, 1931.

North Canterbury Labour Representation Committee (NCLRC) organised a march along the same route as the 1 August procession of 1931, from the railway station to Cranmer Square. It attracted "upwards of 500" people.[54] The subsequent meeting had an audience of some fifteen hundred, and was presided over by H.T. Armstrong M.P.. Amongst the speakers were representatives from the Communist Party and the UWM. The latter was also a communist, Alex Blance. In addition to a number of Labour trade unionists, these revolutionaries shared the platform with three local Labour M.P.'s, Armstrong, Howard and J. McCombs. Truly the lions were lying down with the lamb!

Aside from the collection of fourteen pounds for the UWM, the principal outcome of the meeting was the formation of a United Front Against Capitalism. The committee empowered to draw up its constitution appears to have contained three communists and two members of the Labour Party,[55] but the executive elected in early March appears to have been at least evenly balanced between the two parties with a Labour trade unionist as president.[56] A number of meetings and

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54. Star, 19, 22 February, 1932.

55. A. Blance, C. Saunders and T. Martin were the communists alongside J. Mathison and R.M. Macfarlane of the Labour Party. Star, 25 February, 1932.

56. E. Snow was president, the vice-president was H. McCaw of the Drivers' Union and LRC, Saunders and Blance represented the UWM, Martin the Seamen's Union. C.H. Cole of the No More War Movement was almost certainly a communist and A.C. Elliott of the Islington Freezing Workers' Union may have been. Macfarlane, Mathison, and McCullough swung the balance to Labour.

    The absence of A.F. Marshall from the events of early 1932 can be explained by his arrest in March in Ballarat. He had changed his name to "Arthur King" and described himself as a "communist organiser". He succeeded in an appeal against a vagrancy charge and maintained that the forces of the law were much stricter in New Zealand. Sun, 16 March, 1932.

demonstrations were organised by the front, including one on the 20 March at which Mayor Sullivan presided, alongside the usual mix of Labour and Communist speakers.[57]

During early April there was some tension between Labour and the communists after a strike of relief workers employed by the Waimakariri River Trust. The cause of the dispute was a decision to transfer three hundred men onto full-time relief work. The UWM and representatives of the men on the job maintained that all those employed should be paid the same hourly rate rather than the relief rates which varied according to the number of dependents they had.[58] The strikers had some success in keeping relief workers away from the job and the trust eventually agreed to employ the men on a nine or twelve day fortnight according to the amount of pay they would receive.[59] Despite this success, there were complaints from some Waimakariri workers that the strike funds had been largely absorbed by the UWM.[60] It is also possible that the triumph of an organisation so closely allied to the communists worried many Labour leaders. Whatever the reason, Labour supporters formed a separate Relief Workers' Union under the leadership of R.M. Macfarlane.[61]

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57. Star, 21 March, 1932.

58. Star, 5 April, 1932.

59. Sun, 26, 29, 30 March, 5, 6 April, 1932; Star, 28, 29, 30 March, 1, 5, 11 April, 1932.

60. Sun, 16 April, 1932.

61. It was claimed that "a large number of relief workers" had approached the Waimakariri Strike Committee to appoint a "relief workers' union ...entirely separate from the UWM". Sun, 9 April, 1932. A UWM leader was probably close to the mark, though unduly optimistic, when he claimed that "For years Trades Hall secretaries have been endeavouring to divide the unemployed and more recently they have tried fruitlessly many times to form a relief workers' union". Sun, 16 April, 1932.

Nevertheless, the two organisations continued to co-operate. Marfarlane addressed the secretary of the UWM as "my dear comrade".[62]

Meanwhile the riots of 15 April in Auckland had raised the political temperature in Christchurch as well. At the Central Police Station an inspector was engaged in enrolling volunteers prepared to act as special constables in an emergency.[63] Within two days a thousand had signed up, many of them university students, many others young white-collar workers, and others again returned servicemen.[64] The city awaited the local culmination of Labour's campaign of demonstrations in the form of a march and mass meeting on the First of May. Simultaneously a long-simmering industrial dispute involving prominent members of the CIA and the UFC was suddenly brought to the boil.

It is tempting to regard the tramway strike of May, 1932, simply as an outcome of the depression, one of the few examples of direct action by a union against officially sanctioned wage-cuts. Certainly the economic crisis exacerbated the causes of the dispute, gave it an extra air of desperation and supplied most of the militant manpower in the clashes which occurred. However, the root causes of the strike lay primarily with the effects of technological change and attempts by the tramways board to avoid them.

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62. Letter in Saunders Papers, undated but probably from early in May, 1932.

63. Sun, 16 April, 1932.

64. H. Roth, "The Christchurch Tram Strike of 1932", New Zealand Monthly Review, vol.14, no.147, August, 1973, p.13.

The Christchurch Tramways Board (CTB) had been founded in 1902, thanks largely to the efforts of the ubiquitous and dynamic Tommy Taylor. It had taken over an existing, limited network of horse and steam tramways, converted them to electricity and greatly extended their permanent-way.[65]

From the outset the board faced some special problems related to the level topography of most of the city. The consequent suburban sprawl meant that the board had to build, maintain and service a much greater mileage of rail to the number of passengers carried than in other New Zealand towns.[66] As a public body with the legislative responsibility for public transport within a defined geographic area, it felt obliged to continue to support loss-making lines which ran across sparsely populated districts. The route to North Beach was a particularly large drain on the board's finances.[67] At the same time, the flatness of the terrain encouraged the use of bicycles. The traffic surveys carried out by the city council in the 'twenties and 'thirties indicated that the number of bicycles in use was growing faster than other forms of transport.[68]

However, it was the rise of motor transport that shattered the board's optimism during the 'twenties and reduced it to desperation during the 'thirties. Although the total number of passengers carried by the trams only reached its peak in 1926-27, the number of passengers as a proportion of the population served by the Tramways Board had been dropping

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65. G. Stewart, The End of the Penny Section, Wellington, 1957, p.199-203.
66. Press, 21 June, 19 July, 1927.
67. Press, 1 February, 1926.
68. See Appendix C.

since 1919-20.[69] Most of this was not due to competition to the tram from its eventual usurper, the motor bus. Such competition was delayed by legislation passed in 1926 which placed the licensing of urban public transport in the hands of territorial local bodies.[70] In Christchurch's case this drastically reduced the challenge from private operators as both the Labour Party and the Citizens' Association wished to preserve the tramways. The sole survivor of the new licensing system was the quaintly named Inter-city Bus Company, which ran services through the eastern suburbs to New Brighton and North Beach.[71] Its local popularity and the fact that it served Dan Sullivan's electorate appear to have rescued it. This one private company remained to irritate the board and further reduce its returns on some already hard-pressed routes.

It was, however, the spread of the private motor car, and to a lesser extent the motor taxi, that bit most deeply into the patronage of the trams in Christchurch. The effect was felt not so much in commuter services - concession tickets and the convenience of a service running into the centre of the city sustained its attraction. Rather the major loss occurred in the carrying of holiday-makers to the beaches or the races.[72] The freedom from timetables and fixed routes, and the comparative lack of overcrowding lent motor transport added appeal. The cost might be somewhat

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69. Christchurch Tramway Board (CTB), Abstract Statement of Income and Expenditure with Balance Sheet, 1918-36.

70. The Motor-omnibus Traffic Act, New Zealand Statutes, 1926, No. 67, p.714-22. The CTB secured a special empowering Act to allow it to buy out most local bus services, Ibid., 1927, No. 21, p.806-10.

71. Press, 8 November, 1927.

72. Press, 18 September, 19 October, 1926; Sun, 7 December, 1926.

greater, but "after all, we're on holiday". The loss of family groups and parties on such occasions was especially severe on the revenue of the board, particularly as it normally involved two return journeys (home to Cathedral Square to recreation and back) or an extra long return trip. Furthermore, families who could afford a car were increasingly taking their holidays well outside the urban area, beyond the reach of the trams.

Besides the loss of passengers, the board faced a greater charge for maintenance as a result of the spread of motor transport. Under its empowering legislation it was obliged to maintain a strip of roadway on either side of the tram tracks.[73] This strip suffered to much the same extent as the rest of the road surface from the impact of heavy traffic. Consequently the board was forced to spend large amounts in repairs and on the purchase of new machinery, including a bituman plant. In effect, the board was being required to subsidise its competition.

In order to reduce costs and meet this competition the board was driven to acquire its own fleet of buses. As early as 1926 it was using petrol buses on the St. Martins line and as "feeders" at Northcote.[74] By 1932 the board had nine buses and seven trolley-buses.[75] Not only did this change-over increase the flexibility of the fleet, it reduced the expense of road maintenance to the board while actually

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73. Press, 31 January, 1929.

74. CTB, Abstract..., 1926. The board also began to farm out services to private contractors with the revenue going to itself. The Templeton bus service was run on this basis from 1930. Non-Citizens' Association members alleged that this was an attempt to evade the jurisdiction of the Arbitration Court. Press, 4 November, 1930. Also Times, 18 September, 1931.

75. Ibid., 1934.

increasing the wear on the roads. But these purchases cut further into the board's revenue and its reserves at a time when it was facing massive loan repayments within a few years. Frank Thompson, the tramways' General Manager, displayed his anxiety about this prospect in a booklet published in 1930. He noted that "the Day of Reckoning...will be on the 1st. of October, 1934, when debenture holders to the extent of £778,750 will demand their money back".[76] He hoped to have £546,500 in sinking fund and renewal reserves to off-set the charge, "provided that no further withdrawals for renewals are made". Even in that case, the board would have to have a sufficiently profitable balance sheet and outlook to convince investors to reinvest a quarter of a million pounds in the tramways. The pressure to reduce costs and restore profitability was therefore urgent, especially as most of the members of the board regarded the imposition of a rate as politically unacceptable.[77]

This was also the view of the local press. As the board's problems had mounted during the late 'twenties, it had received little or no sympathy from the city's newspapers. As early as 1926 the Star was asking impatiently "when will the tramways be scrapped?".[78] It favoured a wholesale move to buses but considered any suggestion of the imposition of a rate as "a final confession of incompetence". Even the comparatively favourable Press called on the board repeatedly

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76. F. Thompson, Christchurch Tramways: Official Review of Progress and Development, 1872-1930, Christchurch, 1930, p.42.

77. Sun, 6 December, 1926. W.J. Walter, an Independent member from Waimairi County was the only individual on the board to advocate a rate openly until one was actually levied in 1934.

78. Star, 9 April, 1926.

for greater determination in cutting unprofitable services. It also totally rejected any need for a rate.[79]

The tramways' management attempted to meet its growing financial problems through the adoption of new labour-saving technology and the curtailment of existing services. The introduction of one-man trams, new motorised machinery for laying tracks, concrete and bitumen road surfaces, and Lake Coleridge power to replace steam generation all led to a decline in the number of tramway employees. The total number of such workers dropped sharply from a peak of 731 in 1927 to 465 in 1932.[80] The traffic staff suffered less redundancy than other sections, but as "the elite" amongst the employees and as strong and active trade unionists they found their helplessness particularly galling. Good industrial relations could not flourish in this atmosphere of retrenchment during a period of growing unemployment. The friction was compounded by management attempts to reduce costs in petty ways, to detect any peculation, and to sort out who should be next rendered redundant.[81]

In its pursuit of economy the board proposed a wage cut of five per cent as early as August, 1930.[82] Rebuffed on a technicality by the conciliation commissioner, the board's representatives pointed out that they were not bound by the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act under their empowering legislation. Frank Thompson, the General Manager, put this point of view particularly brutally;

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79. Press, 22 October, 7 December, 1926.

80. CTB, Abstract..., 1927, 1932.

81. The Traffic Manager, W. Dick, appears to have been particularly active in maintaining pressure on the staff. Tramway Employees' Union (TEU), Executive Minutes, 24 September, 1929. See also Sun, 5 May, 1932; 14 November, 1933.

82. Times, 26 September, 1930.

> The Christchurch Tramways Act gives the Tramways Board power to employ workers on whatever terms it thinks fit. We can go outside the Arbitration Act tomorrow. Surely you don't want the board to be forced to smash your agreement...You don't think we would be frightened by direct action, do you?[83]

Industrial relations in the tramways became dangerously inflamed during the autumn of 1931 when the board attempted to use its legal freedom to go beyond the ten per cent wage cut being made under the I.C. and A. Act. Facing a loss of around ten thousand pounds, it proposed only a 2½% wage cut but very substantial changes in conditions, including the abolition of double time on Sundays and paid annual holidays.[84] The union offered to accept a ten per cent wage cut if conditions remained unchanged. Thereupon the board gave all its employees notice and advised them to reapply on 30 April under new rates of pay and conditions.[85] The Acting General Manager, H.E. Jarman, boasted that there were many experienced men applying from amongst those previously retrenched - "some of them will do almost anything for a job".[86] Two days later the President of the TEU, John Mathison, addressed a packed public meeting at the Civic Theatre with the warning; "If any 'scab' in Christchurch wishes to take our jobs (cries of 'shoot them') then Christchurch will witness the greatest catastrophe, such as Christchurch has never seen before".[87]

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83. Times, 27 September, 1930.

84. Press, 21 April, 1931.

85. Times, 21 April, 1931. Four members of the board wanted the union's offer accepted: E.M. McCombs, the sole Labour representative, Walter, and two Liberals who stood as Independents, A. McLachlan and W. Sykes. Press, 2 May, 1931.

86. Press, 2 May, 1931.

87. Times, 4 May, 1931.

Following appeals for negotiation from local clergymen,[88] arbitration led the board to accept a ten per cent cut in wage rates in return for unchanged conditions.[89] This was no more than they would have achieved under the I.C. and A. Act. Nonetheless, they continued to reject registration under that act. Clearly the majority of the board was looking to further opportunities to improve the profitability of the tramways by cutting into the complex network of working conditions which had grown up during their first two decades of operation.

One aspect of these conditions that the TEU was particularly anxious to defend, and the board to alter, was the system of continuous eight-hour shifts to be followed by overtime at time and a half. This helped to give the "trammies" steady and comparatively high weekly earnings. On the other hand it hindered the management's efforts to cut out services at unprofitable times. Crews called in to cope with a few hours of heavy passenger numbers would have to be paid for a full eight-hour shift, thus obviating most of the saving to the board. When the union was offered the option of work rationing during the winter of 1930, ostensibly to prevent further redundancies, it rejected the proposal.[90] The TEU feared that men rostered off would be called back at will by the management to do work at ordinary rates which would normally have been carried out by other tramwaymen on overtime. However, a power shortage during the spring led to an agreement to accept rationing - Mathison

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88. Methodist ministers were specially mentioned. Times, 5 May, 1931.

89. Times, 10 June, 1931.

90. Press, 10 June, 1930.

himself moved that its organisation should be "left entirely in the hands of management".[91] But the motion was rescinded after six weeks and a rejection of "any system of work rationing" was passed overwhelmingly.[92] Apparently members had become thoroughly dissatisfied with the manner in which the tramways' management was operating the scheme.

This rejection remained in force throughout 1931, reinforced by a ballot in which 181 tramwaymen supported the status quo of redundancy where work was not available, 68 advocated shorter hours instead, but only 58 favoured rationing.[93] By the end of the year the greatly depleted permanent-way section was prepared to accept rationing along with the board's coachbuilders, storemen and labourers.[94] But the militant elite of the traffic section disassociated itself from these decisions.[95]

Early in the new year, however, they decided to allow rationing on the basis of one day per man in every three weeks for a trial period of two months.[96] This was in order to postpone fourteen threatened redundancies created when the new Coalition Government passed an Order in Council removing the requirement for the board to employ conductors on trailers as well as tramcars. At the end of the trial period there was again very great dissatisfaction amongst the members of the TEU with the way the rationing had been operated. Mathison

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91. TEU, Minutes, 21 September, 1930.
92. Ibid., 4 November, 29 December, 1930.
93. TEU, Executive Minutes, 10 February, 1931.
94. Press, 7 May, 1932.
95. TEU, Executive Minutes, 3 November, 1931.
96. TEU, Minutes, 26 January, 1932.

declared that the union had "fallen in badly" with the management contriving to save a large amount in wages while calling men back on all but two of the rostered days off.[97] It seemed clear there was no "surplus" of men after all, that work was available for all the traffic staff under the normal conditions of their award. The union therefore rejected an offer of a continuation of the rationing system to save eleven jobs. Rather than await the expiry of the award in June, the board decided to issue dismissal notices to twelve of its employees, the number now considered redundant. The list of men chosen included Mathison.

It was this action which precipitated the strike, being regarded by most tramway employees as a clear case of victimisation.[98] Moreover, by the time of his dismissal Mathison had become very prominent on the radical wing of the wider Christchurch labour movement. He had been instrumental in forming the CIA, along with Ernest Snow, the secretary of the TEU, and a number of other tramwaymen.[99] He had also participated in the formation of the UFC and had been elected its president.[100] The dismissal of such a man would clearly arouse suspicions and create trouble.

No real explanation was ever given as to how those to be dismissed were chosen, beyond a decidedly ambiguous claim that their "services were of least value to the board".[101] The service records of those selected were apparently not outstandingly bad, and this was never given as the basis for

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97. Ibid., 10 April, 1932.
98. Ibid., 1 May, 1932
99. Star, 29 January, 1932.
100. Star, 10 March, 1932.
101. Press, 3 May, 1932.

selection.[102] It was not a question of "last on, first off", as some of those given notice had over twelve years service with the board.[103] Mathison had been employed for seven and a half years, more than one of the conductors arrested during the strike who had not been dismissed.[104] Nor were these premature retirements - Mathison was a young man whereas one of the non-strikers had only fifteen weeks service to go.[105] Furthermore, six of those chosen, including Mathison, were motormen. Such employees were a grade above conductors, and it was apparently the accepted practice to demote them to the latter position and to shed conductors in their stead. Thus the employer retained men with superior qualifications and employees were rewarded for attaining them. H.A. Young, the chairman of the Tramways Appeal Board, stated later that he had expected an appeal on that basis right up to the start of the strike.[106] He maintained that he could not then intervene because the law had been broken by the calling of a strike without twenty-one days notice. A "word to the wise" some time earlier might have been more statesmanlike, given the dangerous social atmosphere. The officers of the union were apparently under the impression that an earlier ruling had taken away the tribunal's jurisdiction in cases involving retrenchment.[107]

Speaking to a meeting of the union three years later, Thompson denied responsibility for Mathison's dismissal, and

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102. Sun, 28 April, 1932.

103. One had seventeen years service, most had seven to twelve years. Press, 3 May, 1932.

104. Sun, 4 May, 1932; Press, 7 May, 1932.

105. Times, 6 May, 1932.

106. Sun, 1 March, 1934.

107. Sun, 16 March, 1934.

this denial was evidently accepted.[108] However, the minutes of the meeting of the board's Traffic and Works Committee on 18 April, 1932, state that the General Manager was to select those men to be dismissed.[109] The Traffic Manager, W. Dick, made the initial selection,[110] probably in conjunction with other officers. It is possible that some board members attempted to exert an influence over the decision. One of them, W. Williamson, a local building contractor renowned for his fiery temper, had been adopting a particularly provocative attitude towards the union's officials. He had, for example, tried to have their special tram passes withdrawn and sought to prevent them talking to members during working time.[111] Shortly before the strike he tried to persuade the board not to see a deputation from the union.[112] Nevertheless, ultimate responsibility lay with Thompson.

A dedicated, somewhat personally isolated and irascible individual, he had devoted most of his working life to the management of Christchurch's tramways. It seems likely he had come to regard them as his own domain.[113] Certainly he was prepared to intercede strongly when he felt the board was

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108. TEU, Executive Minutes, 1 April, 1935. Also Press, 1 December, 1933.

109. CTB, Works and Traffic Committee Minutes, 18 April, 1932. The list of "surplus men to be discharged", including Mathison, was presented to the board without comment. CTB, Reports, 26 April, 1932.

110. Ibid., Report 2881, 2 June, 1932. A.T. Donnelly, the eventual arbitrator in the dispute, noted that the charge of victimisation "was most strongly pressed against the Traffic Manager and less strongly and in fewer instances against the General Manager". Labour Department Files, 14/2/196. Remarkably, Thompson claimed that he had not known who Mathison was, even though he had met him in negotiations in previous years and had surely seen him in recent deputations to the board. Roth, op.cit., p.14.

111. CTB, Works..., 7 December, 1931.

112. Ibid., 2 May, 1932.

113. It is also possible that he was unwell, CTB, Minutes, 2 April, 1931.

taking a wrong approach.[114] There is some evidence of a conflict of personalities - a feeling that an immigrant upstart was threatening the good running of his tramway.[115] His pestering of the Labour Department to prosecute the union long after it had been settled, largely in the board's favour, suggests an element of vindictiveness.[116] Thompson had dealt with Mathison as president of the TEU over three years and clashed with him publicly on a number of occasions. Some of his comments suggest he believed the union officials did not enjoy the support of a majority of members.[117] This belief may well have prompted a desperate attempt to use unemployment and a sympathetically reactionary government to break union resistance to cost-cutting and thereby restore profitability before the board's main debts fell due. Whatever the motive, his decision to dismiss without clear justification a man who was very active in militant circles in Christchurch was, at best, foolish, given the atmosphere of the time and the recent rioting in other cities.

On the first of May the TEU decided to present the board with an ultimatum threatening a strike on the third if the

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114. When public discussion arose about how the board would dispose of its new non-union staff as part of a settlement, Thompson brought forward on his own initiative a report favouring the retention of as many of them as possible. Repeated references to other officers ("my brother officers", "my fellow officers") suggests that they may have urged him on. CTB, Reports, Report 2879, 9 May, 1932.

115. Thompson is said to have referred to the TEU leader as "that Communist Mathison". Roth, op.cit., p.14.

116. Bailey to Chief Inspector, 24 June, 1932; Chief Inspector to Bailey, 27 June, 1932; Thompson to Chief Inspector, 30 June, 1932; Memorandum from Minister of Labour to Secretary of Labour, 13 July, 1932; Deputy-Chief Inspector Moston to Minister, 19 July, 1932, Labour Department Files, 14/2/196.

117. Times, 27 September, 1930.

dismissed men were not reinstated.[118] The activists within the union appear to have over-reacted in giving such short notice of a stoppage, rather than providing the twenty-one days required by the Labour Disputes Investigation Act.[119] There had been and continued to be, considerable public sympathy in non-Labour circles for the trammies' case.[120] Even the editor of the determinedly anti-Labour Press, Oliver Duff, criticised the board as well as the union, an action which was eventually to cost him his job.[121] If the

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118. TEU, Minutes, 1 May, 1932.

119. N.H. Graham, an Inspector under the Labour Disputes Investigation Act, gave his opinion that the TEU had breached the law. Report, 4 May, 1932, Labour Department Files, 14/2/196.

120. The evening newspapers, those catering for a predominantly working-class audience, were particularly sympathetic: "we do not condone a strike in any way, but we do say that the Tramway Board should be magnanimous enough to reopen the case at the eleventh hour and ballot for the twelve men to be dismissed". Star, 3 May, 1932. Later the same newspaper described the dispute as "a very undignified domestic disagreement that should never have been allowed to threaten the tranquillity of the community" (5 May) and claimed that it could have been settled quickly "with a little more tolerance" (6 May). The Sun opposed the strike (2, 3 May) but criticised both sides for the breakdown of talks (4 May). It noted the popularity of the "trammies", and while condemning the lawlessness of the 6 May, it claimed that probably most responsibility "lay not with the strikers, but with one or more of the semi-political organisations which flourish among the general unemployed" (6 May).

121. Not that Duff favoured the strike. Initially he hoped that the men would not be so "foolish" as to initiate a strike "more definitely foredoomed to failure than almost any other strike that could be imagined". He warned that the union's "chief asset is the goodwill of the public, and that the day it makes open war on the public this asset will disappear". Press, 2 May, 1932. Also similar editorial, 3 May 1932. The next day the line was more controversial: "It is a stupid and quite unnecessary conflict and the longer it continues the more impatient the public will become with both sides" (4 May). Then he returned to upbraiding the TEU, but called for the board to reopen negotiations (5 May). He criticised the board for giving "pledges, which may or may not have been necessary, to the volunteer workers..." (6 May). He also disliked the board's initial insistance that the jobs of the new men should not be subject to arbitration (9 May). Duff then returned to calling on the community "to crush...those who begin or encourage strikes" and attacking Sullivan for not thanking the "specials" (10, 16, 18 May). The crucial editorial appears to have been written after the strike. Duff referred to a statement by the irascible W. Williamson in very strong terms:

> the haste which can make a man utter so stupid a charge as that the newspapers had blamed the Board "for being the whole cause of the trouble" must always reflect upon his fitness for public affairs. Press, 24 May, 1932.

sole issue was one of victimisation, as Snow and Mathison claimed, the board would have found difficulty in justifying Mathison's dismissal before a mediator. In the meantime the support of other unions and the Alliance of Labour could have been properly mobilised while the board was obliged to continue to honour its award, which did not expire for another month. As it was, the board was able to claim that the award had already been broken by an illegal strike. The government accepted this argument and provided the board with an Order in Council which permitted it to employ uncertificated workers as motormen.[122]

It is possible that the leaders of the TEU had been carried away by the success of the United Front's May Day Demonstration. A march of at least five hundred people from Trades Hall to Cranmer Square had been followed by a meeting which drew a crowd of five to ten thousand.[123] Sullivan, Archer and other local Labour Party leaders delivered speeches, along with a representative of the Communist Party and another communist representing the UWM. Mathison spoke on behalf of the trade unions. That evening J.A. Lee continued his nation-wide speaking tour with an address to a packed Grand Theatre. One of his themes was "the system must work or the system should go".[124] Interest in the gathering was so high that an overflow meeting of several hundred persons was held in

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122. Press, 5 May, 1932. The minister was Adam Hamilton.

123. Eight to ten thousand was the figure reported for the meeting in Press, 2 May, 1932. However, another newspaper claimed that there were only five to six thousand. Sun, 2 May, 1932. Yet another believed there had been four or five thousand. Times, 2 May, 1932. All agreed on around five hundred for the procession. The Sun noted that it ran into a rather larger march of evangelical youth.

124. He also claimed that "society was falling to pieces". Times, 2 May, 1932.

Victoria Square.[125] Mathison spoke on the same platform as Lee and more than matched the fierceness of his rhetoric; "within a week or two in this district - the first in New Zealand - we will be plunged into the first instalment of an industrial war".[126] Against such a background an impulsive miscalculation could easily have been made.

It is also possible that some leaders of the TEU were worried that opposition to a strike could build up within the union over three weeks. With only about half the membership voting, the decision to strike was far from unanimous at 106 in favour and 68 against.[127] The irrepressible rebel city councillor A.E. Armstrong, employed on the workshops staff, strongly opposed direct action. He pointed out, quite correctly, that the union had lost other presidents during the prolonged period of retrenchment since 1927. His proposal to put the question to a postal vote was only defeated by 84 votes to 73. It is possible that Thompson had judged the attitude of the staff as a whole reasonably correctly. But he had reckoned without the possibility that militants of the Traffic Section would act separately on a ballot at a meeting rather than a ballot of all members of the union.

The Order in Council permitting uncertificated motormen formed the basis of the management's drive to break the strike. Only the Traffic Section, around two hundred and forty men, had been called out initially, although A.E. Armstrong, never one to take orders from any quarter, disregarded the union's

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125. Sun, 2 May, 1932.

126. Press, 2 May, 1932.

127. TEU, Minutes, 1 May, 1932.

instructions and joined them.[128] On the second day of the strike, Ernest Snow, the secretary of the TEU, said that all branches would now strike.[129] Of the 44 staff in the carsheds, 29 struck; the four men of the overhead department struck for one day and then returned; and only 17 of the 44 permanent-way employees came out.[130] Thirty-nine motormen and conductors defied the call to strike and there were twenty-three inspectors to help replace the strikers.[131] Clearly the board required substantial numbers of recruits from outside the tramways, and the depression helped to push hundreds of them forward. The management claimed that around a thousand applications were received in all, some from as far afield as Dunedin and Auckland.[132] Both employed and unemployed men were strongly attracted by the high earnings to be made on the trams.[133] Furthermore, the years of retrenchment in Christchurch and elsewhere as motor transport squeezed the tramways had left a significant pool of outside labour with

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128. Star, 4 May, 1932.

129. Sun, 5 May, 1932.

130. CTB, Works and Traffic Committee Minutes, 16 May, 1932. It is therefore incorrect that "of the union's 368 members all but 39 joined the strike". Roth, op.cit., p.13.

131. The Press talked of thirty-eight "loyalists" after one day, Press, 6 May, 1932. But five days later thirty-nine had become the accepted figure. Times, 11 May, 1932; Sun, 10 May, 1932.

132. Sun, 5 May, 1932.

133. One "volunteer" declared: "I am in a job, the first I've had for two years that looks like a job. I've got work, and I'm too busy to worry about strikes. Get me?" Sun, 5 May, 1932. Paradoxically - but not surprisingly, given their working conditions - some of the strike-breakers were said to be taxi-drivers. A total of 12 or 14 of the 117 new men had given up steady employment. For descriptions of high earnings (and long hours) for the new staff, see Times, 10 May, 1932.

some experience of manning trams.[134] By the end of the second day of the strike the board was providing roughly half its usual services and would clearly be able to do better shortly as its new employees completed their training.[135]

Meanwhile the response from other unions had not been very heartening for the beleagued tramwaymen. A number of organisations had provided monetary as well as material support, and there were many decisions to boycott the trams.[136] However, other unions did not go even that far, and the Alliance of Labour proved unable to call a one day strike of its affiliates, as suggested early in the dispute.[137]

An angry desperation appeared amongst some of the strike leaders as they faced the prospect of humiliation. By 5 May, the third day of the stoppage, barracking of passing trams by strikers and unemployed had given way to more forceful action. Fifteen incidents of interference with the operation of the trams were reported on that day.[138] None was especially violent or destructive, but they signalled the changing mood of the strike. On the same day one of the evening newspapers carried a statement from Thompson that "there is no chance whatever of the whole of the old staff being taken on again".[139]

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134. This is evident from descriptions of the experience of "volunteers" which the later Labour-controlled Tramway Board tried to demote. Press, 27 February, 19 May, 1934. Of those taken on, 29 were former Christchurch tramwaymen and 11 had gained experience elsewhere. CTB, Works and Traffic Committee Minutes, 9 May, 1932. A total of 12 or 14 of the 117 new men had given up steady employment.

135. Press, 5 May, 1932.

136. Sun, 5 May (Drivers' Union), 6 May (Addington Workshops and Freezing Workers' Union), 1932; Times, 9 May (Trades and Labour Council, and Alliance of Labour), 12 May (Painters' Union), 13 May (Bootmakers' Union), 1932.

137. Sun, 29 April, 1932.

138. Sun, 5 May, 1932.

139. Ibid.

That night the TEU and the United Front Against Capitalism Committee (UFC) held simultaneous meetings and journalists reported considerable movement between them.[140] One of the officials of the TEU, probably Mathison, moved to widen the scope of the dispute by handing it over to the UFC. This emerges from an exchange of letters in the Sun two months after the strike. An unemployed striker, styling himself "One of the Mugs", fiercely attacked Snow and other TEU leaders. He claimed that they had failed to ascertain the true level of support from other unions and that the result of the strike ballot "should have shown the officials that a strike was going to fail". He maintained somewhat obscurely, that "a certain club of gentlemen in Christchurch stepped in and gave the union to understand that it was prepared to do anything for the intending strikers". The anonymous correspondent added the city council employees to his targets, criticising their refusal to accept rationing when fifty tramwaymen were unemployed. He concluded bitterly: "I am waiting for the next strike. I know what I will do after the wonderful support I have got from union secretaries, gentlemen's clubs, council employees, Labour M.P.'s and the rest".[141]

Archibald Brewster Grant, a member of the UWM, later its local chairman, and later again a Workers' Representative on the Arbitration Court, replied with a strong defence of the UWM:

> When Mr Snow found he was unable to run the strike, he handed his troubles over to a body comprising the Associated Trade Unions, UWM, and various other organisations, which collective body was grandiloquently named "The United Front Against Capitalism".

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140. Sun, 6 May, 1932.

141. Sun, 9 July, 1932.

> The only organisation in all these collective bodies which allowed itself to be used in assisting the strikers was the UWM. The members of this movement turned up loyally in order to assist the strikers and while the police picked up three tramwaymen, they also picked up over a dozen unemployed workers and one woman...if the unemployed men had not turned out ready and willing to assist the "trammies", the so-called strike would only have amounted to about a hundred men walking out of their jobs and being replaced by other men.[142]

Snow immediately replied that "if anything were handed over it certainly wasn't I that did it".[143] Grant accepted the rebuke and said he should have used the term "striking tramwaymen" instead - "then I would have been sure to have included the responsible one".[144] Mathison had been working for a Christchurch newspaper since early in the strike and would have been well aware of this correspondence, but he did not step in to contradict Grant as Snow did.

Labour supporters on the UFC, the Relief Workers' Union and the Alliance of Labour appear to have combined to counter any move to more violent action. There was particular bitterness with the UWM at the role played by Jim Roberts and Arthur Cook of the Alliance of Labour.[145] When the UWM attempted to mobilise local relief workers in a strike that might have brought large numbers of them into town, the

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142. Sun, 13 July, 1932.

143. Sun, 14 July, 1932.

144. Sun, 16 July, 1932.

145. "There is evidence of a shocking betrayal of the Christchurch workers in their struggle. The paid parasites have run into their holes". National Secretary, UWM, to A. Blance, 7 May, 1932, Saunders Papers. "...the Tramway men have lost their fight through the class collaboration of officials, abetted by Roberts and Cook of the Alliance of Labour". Acting-Secretary, Christchurch UWM to National Secretary, UWM, 27 May, 1932, Saunders Papers. Grant claimed that "the only militant organisation in Christchurch was split by the Trades Hall coterie, because that organisation would have in the near future threatened the safety of the secretaries". Sun, 19 July, 1932.

Alliance leaders condemned such a move.[146] A significant number of letters from relief workers rejecting the strike call were published in the newspapers.[147]

Even the Communist Party appears to have held back from supporting violent mass action,[148] although a number of its members did take part in the subsequent outbreaks, possibly as members of the UWM. Only the willing and frequently youthful labourers of that organisation came forward to provide physical assistance to stop the trams. As early as the first day of the strike about fifty members of the unemployed had waited on the TEU under UWM leadership to offer their full support.[149] In March the trammies had been particularly generous in their support of the Waimakariri relief work strike. Now as the crowd emerged from the UFC meeting "oyster" was the watchword and most of those present refused to talk to journalists.[150] The latter had been ordered out of the meeting earlier and one reporter had been assaulted as he left. Now one individual leaving the hall was heard to maintain that no tram would leave the depot the next day.

The militants had their usual level of success in keeping their plans secret from the authorities. Consequently the police were well-prepared for the attack on the first tram to leave the depot in the morning. The attackers were met by some

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146. Sun, 12 May, 1932. Roberts told the CTB that he had been "sent down by the Alliance of Labour because of the fear of the trouble spreading". CTB, Works and Traffic Committee Minutes, 9 May, 1932.

147. Sun, 16 May, 1932.

148. M. Graham, The Christchurch Tramway Strike, 1932, unpublished University of Canterbury extended essay, 1978, p.45. Based on a letter from J.J. Porter, a member of the Communist Party at the time.

149. Star, 4 May, 1932.

150. Times, 6 May, 1932.

hundreds of regular police and "specials" and were rapidly dispersed.[151] A more dangerous situation developed in Cathedral Square later in the day after another meeting at Trades Hall and a statement from Mathison "as much as to say that if any woman started anything in the square, they would be right behind us".[152] A crowd estimated at three thousand milled about to watch the efforts to stop the trams.[153] A few were arrested and hurried away in commandeered taxis. The police appear to have wisely avoided arresting any of the women present and kept their reinforcements of "specials" in the King Edward Barracks, well away from the square.[154] The latter decision was possibly influenced by the events of the previous month in Auckland, where the presence of special constables in Karangahape Road appeared to provoke the crowd.

There was similar activity the next day outside Lancaster Park. This followed a rugby match in which some "specials" were playing for the Christchurch Club.[155] As the crowd swarmed around the gates and the waiting trams three men

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151. Press, 7 May, 1932.

152. A. Simpson, The Sugarbag Years, Wellington, 1974, p.130.

153. Times, 7 May, 1932.

154. Press, 8 May, 1932. Scotter, op.cit., p.381. A woman was later arrested in the Square. She had been in Wellington at the time of the disturbances there and the police were able to quote some of her approving remarks on her return. Press, 25 May, 1932.

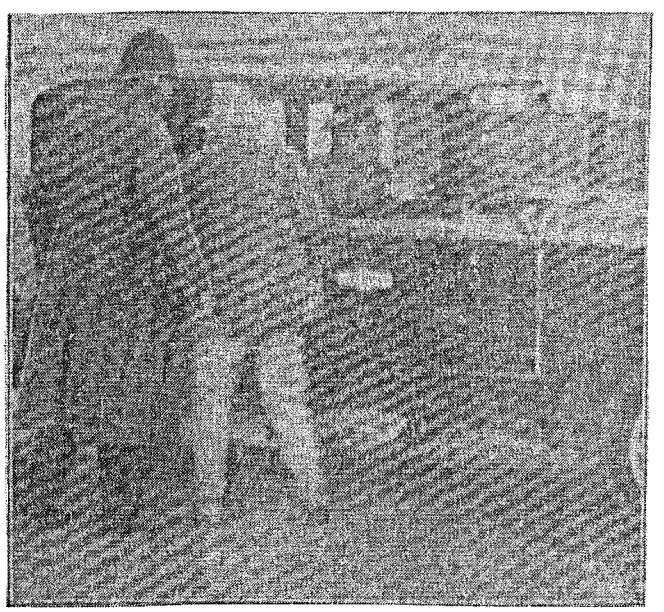
155. According to one account (Press, 9 May, 1932) there were seven thousand people in the ground - a large number, but far from a record crowd for an important inter-club match in Christchurch. It claimed that two thousand gathered outside the gates after the game, most of them just curious. Tramcar windows were smashed. The Times, 9 May, 1932, maintained that only five hundred people congregated outside the gates. It noted "hooting and booing" when kicks were taken - not yet standard behaviour at Lancaster Park. Both newspapers and the Sun, 9 May, 1932, described how the Christchurch team had left the park in a Black Maria with a doubtless rather subdued demonstrator in their midst.
The 'Varsity Senior team was also declared black. Times, 16 May, 1932. There had been booing at its game at Addington on 7 May. Sun, 7 May, 1932.

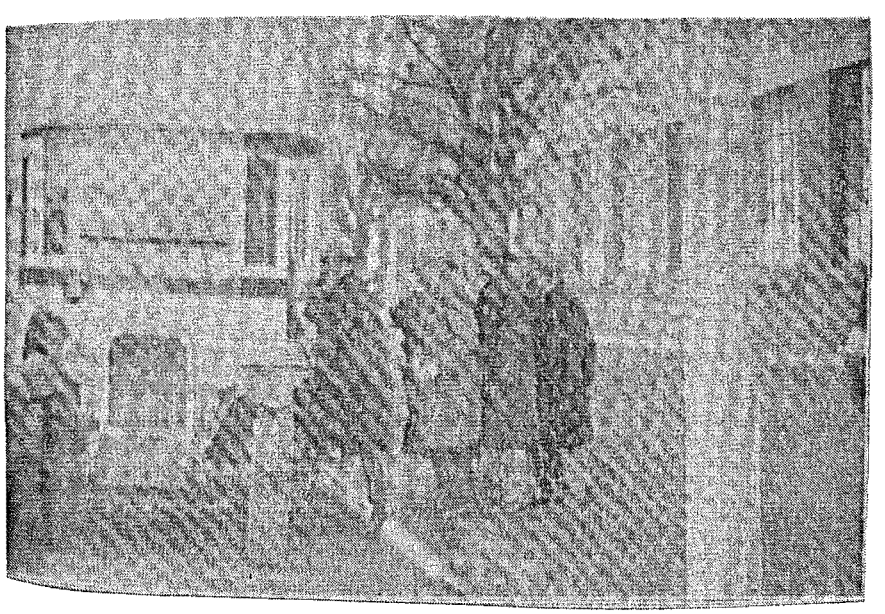
27. John Mathison, President of the Tramway Employees' Union, whose dismissal sparked the 1932 strike.
(Official Christchurch City Council photograph, 1933.)

28. Frank Thompson, General Manager of the Christchurch Tramway Board in 1932.
(Christchurch City Council, Sixty Years of Progress, Christchurch, 1928, p.97.)

29. Taxis were extensively used by the police during periods of disorder in the early 'thirties, both to carry away those arrested and to provide rapid transport to trouble spots.
(Star, 6 May, 1932)

30. Large numbers of ordinary or special police travelled quickly about the city by motor transport.
(Star, 6 May, 1932)





ERRATA

RE CONCLUDING SENTENCES OF FOOTNOTE 121 :

Duff had already resinged by 24 May. Therefore it must have been his more than usually even-handed editorials during the strike which led to criticism of him, and his subsequent resignation.

climbed aboard one of the railcars and assaulted the conductor. The latter, William Laing, continued working but died three weeks later from complications arising from his injuries.[156] An unemployed painter was charged with manslaughter but was found not guilty on the direction of the presiding judge because of doubts about eye-witnesses' identification of the accused.[157]

On the same day as the Lancaster Park disorder, there was an attempt by a number of unemployed to attack a Riccarton tram beyond Hagley Park.[158] The car proved to be heavily manned by police, clearly alerted to the planned assault, and the attackers were rounded up. Aside from continued sporadic night-time raids to break the windows of shopkeepers who helped to break the strike, no further violence occurred. By now a high proportion of the local UWM was in prison.[159] When it came to sentencing those found guilty of illegal activity during the strike the magistrate, E.D. Mosley, indicated some possible sympathy for the tramwaymen's case and certainly favoured the few of them who had been arrested over their hapless allies from the unemployed. He claimed that "these men are in an entirely different category from the others who have appeared today. They are ex-employees of the Tramways Board who, I know from my own experience, are a very decent set of men".[160] He fined them three pounds and costs

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156. Times, 31 May, 8 July, 1932. Laing had immigrated from Ireland in 1931.

157. Press, 20 September, 1932.

158. Press, 9, 10 May, 1932. "Trouble was feared at Riccarton". Times, 7 May, 1932.

159. "Some of our bravest and best are in for long sentences..." Saunders Papers, Acting-Secretary, Christchurch UWM (C. Saunders), to Secretary, Dunedin UWM, 27 May, 1932. "Both the C.P. and the U.W.M. have lost some of their best fighters who now lie in gaol". Ibid., Acting-Secretary, Christchurch UWM, to National Secretary, UWM, 27 May, 1932.

160. Press, 13 May, 1932.

while sending several of the unemployed down for three months hard labour on the same charge. The same attitudes appear to have been prevalent amongst the police. It is sometimes maintained that there was immense sympathy for the unemployed within the police force.[161] If so, this did not appear to extend to the activists amongst the unemployed in Christchurch. One was apparently beaten up after his arrest at the tram sheds.[162] An account written shortly afterwards by another details repeated physical and verbal assaults on the way to the police station and later.[163] Another wrote in a private letter of being dragged for two hundred yards by the head and arms after being arrested.[164] It is possible that local police attitudes were somewhat influenced by the outcome of the railway station clash less than a year earlier when some of them had suffered serious injuries and had been humiliated.

Negotiations for a settlement of the strike continued meanwhile. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the officials of the TEU grossly overestimated their strength early in the dispute and forfeited the chance of a settlement which would have kept the union intact. In addition to Elizabeth McCombs, there were a number of board members who appear to have wished to avoid a head-on confrontation with the union. These included Sykes, McLachlan, Walter and, possibly, Hayward and Andrews (the Chairman).[165] On 3 May

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161. Graham, op.cit., p.60; Simpson, op.cit., p.110. But see p.108 for mixed feelings from one of the Christchurch unemployed - "I don't remember a sympathetic policeman..."

162. Selwyn Devereux, Times, 13 May, 1932. See also Simpson, op.cit., p.130.

163. Undated statement, written in May, 1932, Saunders Papers.

164. Letter from "Watson" to "Joe and Mrs" [indescipherable] 15 May, 1932, Saunders Papers.

165. Judging by the positions they took on various issues, CTB, Works and Traffic Committee Minutes, 18 April to 11 May, 1932.

the board and the union's officials gathered in separate rooms with Sullivan, Archer and J. McCombs mediating between them.[166] Andrews moved substantially from the board's initial position. He proposed that the notices of dismissal should be withdrawn in return for the strike being called off and a rationing scheme accepted until 8 June, when the award expired. According to his recollection two years later, this suggestion, written out by Hayward, appeared for a moment to have settled the dispute:

> Mr Hayward was writing and Mr Sullivan looked over his shoulder and said something like: "I think Hayward has got it". He then read the resolution drawn up by Mr Hayward and said "that will do me". The late Mr McCombs then had a look at it and he said: "It does not go quite as far as I wanted, but I think it will do," or words to that effect. Mr Archer then said, "All right. I will tear up my papers," and this he proceeded to do. The Labour men then went into the room where the union representatives were, apparently quite confident that the resolution would be accepted by the men as a fair basis of settlement. A little while later, they came back quite cressfallen, saying the men would not accept it.[167]

Still maintaining that the board has used rationing as a "cheap stand-by system", the union was insisting that members called back when rationed off should be paid at time-and-a-half rates. This "demand" appears to have incensed at least one of the moderates on the board and led to the collapse of the talks.[168] Rather than accept a maximum reduction of less than three per cent in the wage bill of the traffic staff[169] the TEU kept its neck in the noose which the board's extremists and its senior staff were only too happy to pull tight.

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166. Ibid., 3 May, 1932.

167. Sun, 30 May, 1934.

168. Sykes was the moderate. Times, 27 May, 1932. Sixty-one tramwaymen had voted on 1 May (96 opposed it). TEU, Minutes, 1 May, 1932.

169. Twelve men called back continuously at ordinary rates rather than time-and-a-half would lose the equivalent of six men's wages or about 2.5% of the traffic section's wages.

Two days later the board met again. McLachlan emphasised that as few new men as possible should be taken on because the strikers would eventually have to be re-employed.[170] However, the board hardened its position following conciliatory discussions with Archer and agreement that the local Anglican Bishop, West-Watson, should be appointed as mediator. Significantly, it was a "suggestion" from Thompson after Archer had left which embodied this hardening. He proposed that all suitable new men should be kept on, that this would necessitate more rationing and that the strike should be called off before negotiations on rationing could commence. Talks during the next five days (6 May to 11 May) involved a wide range of mediators - notably Bishops West-Watson and Brodie (the Roman Catholic incumbent), representatives of other major churches, Archer, H.T. Armstrong M.P., Sullivan, Hally and Jim Roberts of the Alliance of Labour.[171] They centred on the membership and terms of reference of a tribunal of arbitration and the main sticking-point was whether the continued employment of the "volunteers" was negotiable. Finally both sides agreed that A.T. Donnelly, a local lawyer, should be the sole arbitrator with powers to decide all matters. On the board only the extremists Williamson and Pearce opposed this decision.[172]

On 16 May Donnelly delivered his judgement. He proposed that only sixty of the 117 new men should be kept on.[173] Although he recommended rationing to keep on as many of the

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170. CTB, Works and Traffic Committee Minutes, 5 May, 1932.

171. Ibid., 6, 7, 9 May, 1932.

172. Ibid., 11 May, 1932.

173. Sun, 16 May, 1932.

old staff as possible, a large number remained unemployed or were gradually declared redundant. Donnelly found the charge of victimisation against the board "unproven" but the dismissal of Mathison "unwise". On 17 May the TEU called the strike off.[174]

Although the strike resulted in further job losses, rationing and reductions in conditions during the next year,[175] it cannot be counted as a complete failure. There can be little doubt that it contributed significantly to the election of a Labour majority, including Mathison, onto the Tramways Board in 1933. There was a particularly heavy turnout in labouring areas and a high level of informal voting, as in Labour's city council success in 1927.[176] Clearly the memory of the strike and the efforts of the dismissed strikers (who formed a very active association) had got out the vote. It faced a lacklustre board which had previously relied upon a low Labour poll to ensure the success of its own relatively meagre and unenthusiastic support.

The Labour ticket which won the election had claimed that there would be no need for a rate and Mathison had declared its slogan to be "back to the trams".[177] The first of these

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174. Times, 18 May, 1932.

175. At the end of May seven members of the TEU lost their jobs. TEU, Minutes, 31 May, 1932. Many redundancies were clearly planned by the tramways administration before the strike on the basis of the move to one-man trams and buses. Elizabeth McCombs told the board that the men were well aware of such plans. CTB, Works and Traffic Committee Minutes, 5 May, 1932. Thompson spoke of a plan to reduce employee numbers by 52 over three years on the same day. Press, 5 May, 1932.

176. Press, 1 December, 1933. The total vote was double that in the previous election.

177. Star, 1 December, 1933. Also denial of possibility of rating. Sun, 2 November, 1932. Archer described Sidney Holland's claim that Labour would levy a rate as "too silly for words". Times, 29 July, 1933. He also termed the one-man cars "death-traps". Sun, 1 December, 1933.

promises had to be broken at the end of the first year when the election of the new board and experiments with fare reductions proved insufficient to reverse the downwards slide in the tramways' finances. However, E.H. Howard, the Labour M.P. and member of the board was driven to exasperation before his colleagues agreed to his proposal for a rate. On 9 March, 1934, he noted in his very intermittent diary;

> Tramway meeting. Every day in every way getting worse and worse. Our board is a poor board. Mathison obsessed by hate, Manning obsessed by his M.A. and not to offend the master class because of support to WEA, Parlane a chair warmer and Lizzie [Elizabeth McCombs] a woman.[178]

The rate was finally set at .07d in the £.[179] Two years later this was doubled, not least to help finance the purchase of further one-man cars and more buses.[180] In March, 1936, there were thirteen buses and eleven trolley-buses in the board's fleet, as against nine and seven respectively in 1932.[181] In 1937 the new board was to float a major loan, with the approval of a loan poll, to purchase a large number of new buses.[182] Despite the obvious move away from its pledges of opposition to rating and buses, Labour had won an even more convincing victory in the tramway election of 1936.[183] Not only did the ex-tramwaymen (some of them now re-employed by the board) maintain their mobilisation of the Labour vote, the old board was greatly discredited by a report from two prominent accountants strongly criticising its policy

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178. Entry for 9 April, 1934. Howard Papers, 980/8.

179. Press, 21 May, 1934.

180. Star-Sun, 12 May, 1936.

181. CTB, Abstract..., 1936.

182. Ibid., 1938.

183. Star-Sun, 27 November, 1936.

of running down reserves rather than levying a rate.[184] The non-Labour forces could not even play on a reputation for "sound business management" against alleged socialist incompetence. Furthermore, the rate increase was small compared with the total consolidated rate paid by each householder. Within the city it was hidden by the rate reduction provided by the new Citizens' council

The generally bleak history of the Christchurch tramways between 1926 and 1936 was essentially the record of a hopeless and harmful struggle to escape the consequences of technological change. The economic and political environment of the depression certainly exerted a considerable influence on the course of this struggle, but its origins and outcome clearly lay with the rise of motor transport. A majority of the old board sought to fight this development primarily by lowering the earnings and altering the working conditions of its employees. In the meantime it attempted to purchase the necessary new technology piecemeal out of a shrinking revenue. This policy led eventually to a rather squalid confrontation with its traffic staff which proved both financially and politically expensive. In opposition Labour would have assailed the board unmercifully had it imposed an "unnecessary" rate. In power most Labour members were eventually brought to accept the need for greatly accelerated technological change and for a tramways rate, both to finance the new capital expenditure and to sustain public transport as motor cars proliferated. The politicians moved timidly and belatedly to accommodate economic reality and were no doubt surprised that this did not carry a heavy electoral price.

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184. Press, 24 April, 1934.

Labour's provocative tactics during 1932 sat poorly with leaders such as Sullivan, James McCombs and Archer. They were not men who regarded the prospect of a revolution with excitment or equanimity, as did the iconoclastic John A. Lee.[185] Revolution meant a challenge to values which were an integral part of their view of socialism; the appeal to reason, decorous behaviour, respect for authority and the preservation of public and private property. On the one hand, it could lead to savage repression and the loss of the enormous advances made so far by parliamentary and moderate trade union methods. On the other, it might well allow a transfer of power to people whom they considered irresponsibles with no knowledge of its constructive use. The latter were mostly self-confessed atheists who seemed to threaten not only private property but the established churches. A Baptist minister, an Anglican lay-preacher who had trained for the ministry, and a devout Roman Catholic could only be worried by such a prospect. They believed that socialists should uplift and educate the labouring class, not appeal to its "baser instincts", its physical strength and its capacity for personal violence. McCombs and Sullivan had condemned the Russian Revolution; they were hardly likely to welcome one in New Zealand.

McCombs and Archer had taken little part in the demonstrations of early 1932, except to stress the large numbers assembled and their orderly behaviour.[186] Sullivan had presided at a number of rallies. He had talked of the

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185. Olssen, op.cit., p.56.

186. Times, 21 March, 1932. However, Sullivan had to rebuke one speaker for criticising the Governor-General.

"dangerous" nature of the government's attacks on the Arbitration Court,[187] but in much the same way as the local evening newspapers.[188] Similarly he had raised the possibility of a reduction of New Zealand standards of living to those of "the coolie and the kaffir".[189] Unlike Labour leaders from elsewhere, he had left out remarks about revolutions or speculation about how long the sufferings of the people could last without an explosion of disorder.[190] Sullivan had not been listed to speak at the May Day demonstration, but had done so, partly to contradict a communist emphasis on a struggle for free speech.[191] He assured the crowd that there was complete free speech in Christchurch under the Labour council. Archer also stood to state that the government had no moral authority in the city as the majority of the population and the council were united against it. The implication was that there was no need to call for a revolution in Christchurch.

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187. Sun, 6 February, 1932.

188. Editorials in Sun, 12 March, 1932; Star, 23 February, 3, 8 March, 1, 4 April, 1932. The Star condemned the abolition of compulsory arbitration as a "blunder of the first magnitude" on 8 April. On 1 April it warned that the

> unscrupulous and needy employer will exact the lowest possible wage from whatever classes amongst his workers are least strongly organised and logically there can be no condemnation of the worker if, by the strike method, he is forced to use the only weapon by which he can protect himself from exploitation.

On 4 April the Star supported the Labour Party's position on the I.C. and A. Amendment Bill.

189. Press, 2 May, 1932.

190. Sullivan's attitude to his own party's campaign may have been revealed in his response to proposals to the creation of a local "New Guard":

> I am not shutting my eyes or burying my head in the sand, but I feel strongly that, in a quiet community like ours that the less we talk about trouble or expect trouble the less likelihood there is that we will get it. Times, 18 April, 1932.

191. Press, 2 May, 1932.

Some of the statements made by Sullivan and Archer were misleading. For example, banners to be carried at protests were subject to council approval, and, like applications to hold meetings, were secretly referred to the police, local representatives of the government's authority. Amongst banners rejected during the previous month had been signs calling for "Free Speech and Assembly", "No Rationing of Work" and "Around Lenin's Corner Not Coates'".[192] Rather than risk an outburst of rioting amongst Latin scholars, the police and council thought it best to ban "Summun Jus Summa Injuria". However, they apparently judged "Hands Off the Chinese Soviets" sufficiently esoteric not to arouse savage passions amongst the citizens of Christchurch.

Sullivan worked hard to settle the tramway dispute and strongly attacked the more extreme examples of actions in support of the strike.[193] He accepted the need for special police but regretted that in the event they were recruited "from only one class".[194] He also appeared to defy a police ban on open-air meetings after 4 p.m. by allowing gatherings in the council yard behind the Civic Theatre.[195] However, the dispensation was only intended for times when the crowd could not be accommodated in the theatre itself.[196] This was a wise precaution in view of the fact that the Auckland riot

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192. Sullivan to Secretary, United Front Committee, Christchurch City Council, Outward Correspondence, 26 April, 1932.

193. Informed in Wellington that gelignite had been discovered on some tram tracks, Sullivan talked of "savage inhumanity" and maintained that "nothing justifies rioting and attempted murder". Press, 7 May, 1932.

194. Times, 17 May, 1932.

195. Press, 18 May, 1932.

196. Sullivan to Superintendent of Police, Christchurch City Council, Outward Correspondence, 17 May, 1932.

had started when a large group of unemployed had proved unable to fit into the Town Hall. At least one gathering was held in the yard,[197] but permission was refused to the Labour Defence League (LDL) on the grounds that the offer extended only to the unemployed.[198] A renewed application through H.T. Armstrong M.P. rather than the communist secretary of the LDL was accepted but the event was then transferred to a hall.[199] Winter evenings in Christchurch soon cooled the enthusiasm for open-air meetings.

The police ban did much to relieve the pressure on the Labour city council. Now they had only to take responsibility for daytime meetings. In fact the city by-laws only required council permission for demonstrations along city streets or in Cathedral Square. But Sullivan and other Labour leaders fostered the illusion that all open-air meetings had to be approved. In this way they were able to keep in touch with what the radical element was doing and to move to counter any dangerous developments. They were also able to keep the police informed as all applications were secretly referred to them and their advice was usually accepted. This practice also no doubt gave the police confidence in the council and gave the mayor some influence over them.

Sullivan outlined the policy on meetings in a letter marked "very confidential" to a Labour supporter in Auckland.[200] He described how "permission" was normally granted. But in an apparent reference to events at the time of the railway

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197. Times, 19 May, 1932. One hundred and fifty were said to be present.

198. Sullivan to Riley, Christchurch City Council, Outward Correspondence, 18 May, 1932.

199. Sullivan to H.T. Armstrong, Ibid., 19 May, 1932.

200. Sullivan to A. Rosser, Ibid., 11 September, 1934.

station clash he noted that "circumstances may arise, as they have in the past, which may make impossible these easy tolerances". In general he favoured providing a safety-valve for the steam which events engendered;

> we must never forget that Great Britain, in contra-distinction to most of the continental countries, has proved that, by letting people speak freely and give expression to their grievances, disorderly action is stalled off.

Nevertheless, he was very aware of the danger of allowing crowds of the unemployed to gather near shopping areas. He mentioned that the council had made permission for one march conditional on its route being shifted away from the city centre and he believed that Christchurch was better able to accommodate a relaxed policy towards meetings than Auckland, which lacked "open spaces unsurrounded by business buildings". Sullivan concluded his letter with a strong injunction

> to make no reference in any discussion which may take place either to my reference to the Police in any shape or form or to the fact that we have no specific by-law under which public meetings can be prohibited.

The advantages of this policy were demonstrated during the agitation which followed the announcement in 1934 that married men would also be drafted into work camps. Sullivan replied to a request from militant leaders to hold a Friday-night demonstration by pointing out that the police ban on night-time gatherings in the open-air was still in force.[201] Simultaneously he stated that he was preparing a mass meeting at the weekend and that the applicants were welcome to take part. In this way they were assured of a large audience while Sullivan was able to stack the platform with religious and

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201. Sullivan to R. Macdonald, Ibid., 5 June, 1933.

community leaders who also denounced the government's plan but who could be counted on to attract respectable people to the crowd and to rouse no rabble.[202]

Publicly Sullivan always emphasised the role of charity in forestalling trouble. It was not so much that depots prevented riots by starving people, rather it was that their closure due to lack of goods might have led to angry outbursts by a crowd of disappointed applicants.

In order to avoid such an outbreak, Sullivan sought to encourage and coordinate the charitable efforts of citizens with the time, means and inclination to help. In doing this he demonstrated a great knack of winning the respect, even the friendship, of wealthy members of the community who were opposed to the Labour Party politically. H.G. Livingstone, a prominent local member of the Reform Party articulated this regard during 1933:

> we know how much it means to have the administration of relief in the hands of one who can meet all sections of the community and leave a feeling with them all that he is doing his best for them.[203]

Sullivan enthusiastically promoted a "pound scheme" as a means of stocking the depots during the winter of 1931. District committees which were typically based on the local elected school committees organised door-to-door collections, commonly using boy scouts as collectors.[204] Householders were asked to donate parcels weighing a pound, and anything else they could spare. The proceeds were then sent in to a central store and distributed through eight depots run by

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202. Sullivan to various organisations, Ibid., 5 June, 1933.

203. Press, 30 May, 1933.

204. Press, 9, 20, 23, 25 June, 1931.

clergymen throughout the working class areas of the city.[205] In this way assistance was transferred from wealthier to poorer areas, although the process was somewhat hampered by the fact that the well-heeled suburbs of Riccarton and Sumner operated separate schemes. New Brighton, which contained a large number of the city's unemployed, also had its own scheme but had to rely on increasing amounts of assistance from the city collection.

Sullivan sponsored the creation of a Citizens' Relief Association (CRA) to supervise the pound scheme. This drew together several social workers and local notables, most of

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205. There is something of a misapprehension that the established churches played only a limited role in the relief effort in Christchurch:

> In Christchurch, however, the churches were less organised. A vigorous Labour city council had aroused public sympathy at an early stage, offsetting the need for large-scale church action... what individual moves there were remained confined to small activities such as the Anglican doss-house in St. Martins in 1929 and a Salvation Army soup kitchen in 1928. Such activities did not expand to any great extent until unemployment was near its height and then only in fields which did not conflict with the major work of the Metropolitan Relief Association. R. Roberston, The Tyranny of Circumstances, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Otago, 1978, p.106.

On the contrary, clergymen and their wives, church social organisations and church property were essential to the Central (later Metrolpolitan) Relief Association's effort. The distribution depots for the pound scheme in the central city were run by the Salvation Army (at the Scottish Society Hall in Manchester Street) and Rev. P. Revell (the Anglican-based St. Martin's House of Help in Salisbury Street not St. Martins). Further afield, Mrs A. Fraer (the wife of an Anglican minister) ran a depot in Phillipstown and a Presbyterian minister, Rev. L. McMaster, had his St. Peter's Helping Hand Depot in Woolston. Both the Methodist and Anglican churches in Sydenham operated depots. The Anglicans had a depot in Addington and there was a small depot in Richmond. The St. Martin's and Salvation Army "doss-houses" operated throughout the depression. The Rev. L.B. Neale (Methodist) ran a popular relief depot in St. Albans until 1930. Other clergymen to operate depots supplied by the Relief Association included Rev. L.M. Rogers (Presbyterian, Sydenham), Father Maguire (Roman Catholic, Eastern Central City) and Rev. Haynes (Anglican, Papanui). Christchurch City Council, Outward Correspondence, 8 July, 10 October, 1931; 25 September, 1934.

them not friends of the Labour Party.[206] However, he retained overall control through the Mayor's Relief of Distress Fund (MRDF) which helped to support a number of other charities besides the CRA. These included the long-established Mayor's Coal and Blanket Fund. Sullivan also interviewed thousands of applicants for assistance himself, providing some practical help as well as sympathy, and often referring the individuals to specific charities.[207] Money for the MRDF came from a variety of sources including street appeals, band and variety concerts, and donations from the city council and the MED. Lunchtime "community sings" which were held in the Civic Theatre between 1931 and 1935 represented another substantial source of income. They were also broadcast over one of the local radio stations. Sullivan frequently attended these sessions (the Civic Chambers were next door) and on occasions, apparently mercifully rare, was bribed into demonstrating his own limited musical talent. Such concerts, may have served a psychologically helpful role by providing a comparatively cheap distraction and a chance to participate in a cheerful community activity. The overwhelming majority of the audiences were women.[208] There were also some very well-attended community dances held in the open-air in Cranmner and Victoria Squares during the summer of 1931-32. In the following year the MED provided around quarter of the MRDF's income with a donation of £2,500 out of its total profit of

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206. Press, 20 May, 1931. George Harper was chairman and was later knighted by the Labour Government.

207. On one day in the winter of 1931 Sullivan carried out 120 interviews, an achievement of which he was understandably proud. Star, 28 July, 1931.

208. Times, 23 September, 1931, 31 November, 1932, 8 June, 1934; Press, 8 August, 1933.

over £32,000.[209] Other major sources of finance for the fund included an "All Nations' Fair" and a "Come to Christchurch" carnival week.[210] The latter featured a "Venetian Night" with a waterborne torchlight parade on the Avon.[211] There was no lack of circuses to provide bread.

The extent of Sullivan's ability to mobilise the rich and powerful in Christchurch in support of charity was most fully demonstrated in 1933. Early in the year he called a conference of local bodies and persuaded most of them to support the conversion of the CRA into a Metropolitan Relief Association (MRA), covering almost the whole urban area.[212] In May he launched a Businessman's Relief of Distress Committee which was to raise most of the money and goods distributed that winter.[213] The memory of the riots of the previous year and some disorders at the city's relief depots at the beginning of the year spurred Sullivan on and may have influenced some of the businessmen involved. However, the main impetus behind the very widespread participation of business people in the year's operations appears to have been the shock of the devaluation in January. The same disenchantment with the government, sense of crisis and desire to take positive action that spawned the New Zealand Legion also inspired the Businessman's Committee. The two movements actually shared some of the same personnel, including Sidney George Holland, later to be Prime Minister. There were

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209. Times, 28 June, 1932.

210. Press, 9 April, 25 August, 2, 15 September, 1932.

211. R. Lamb, From the Banks of the Avon, Wellington, 1981, p.100.

212. Times, 15 March, 5 April, 1933.

213. Press, 24 May, 1933.

similar comparisons to the crisis of the Great War, invoking "the spirit of 1918" and deprecating party politics.[214] The work of the committee was divided into sections under the supervision of "Group Captains".[215]

A total of around £14,000 was raised through the efforts of the committee and very large quantities of goods and clothing were also collected. Distribution was made through ten depots and the weekly number of applications (one per family) peaked at over three thousand.[216] The community sings developed an enormous popularity during the year, with some attendances exceeding two thousand, in addition to a very large radio audience.[217]

After such a massive effort, it was understandable that public enthusiasm tended to wane in the following year. The amount raised through donations diminished sharply and the MRA was compelled to rely on transfers from the MED profits, the community sings, and a share of the proceeds of national art unions.[218] This latter source had been earlier rejected by Sullivan on the grounds that its acceptance would alienate the sympathy of some citizens who objected to gambling.[219]

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214. Press, 3 June, 1933. One Citizens' Association councillor very active in the movement, M.E. Lyons, talked of "a war-time job" and a drive "amounting to conscription".

215. Press, 24 May, 1933; Times, 7 June, 1933.

216. Times, 25 July, 1933.

217. Times, 28 July, 1933. Many queued outside and the crowd overflowed onto the stage. Press, 21 July, 8 August, 31 November, 1933. Criticism of the "sings" by a correspondent to the Times provoked a flood of letters in support. Times, 31 July, 1933.

218. Times, 6 September, 1934.

219. "In view of division public opinion in city on morality and desirability on Art Unions for any purpose am not disposed at present to concur." Sullivan to Black (telegram), Christchurch City Council, Outward Correspondence, 5 August, 1931.

Presumably he was particularly concerned about the attitude of some of the clergymen involved in the relief effort. The demand for assistance remained high in 1934 and 1935, at an average of well over two thousand applications a week.[220] Increases in relief work pay, allowances of rations, clothing and blankets, and the growing availability of casual work removed some of the pressure from the able-bodied unemployed. The MRA became more and more involved in supplementing hospital board allowances, sustenance and pensions. Sullivan also directed more of his funds towards specific needs such as subsidising milk in schools where parents could not afford it.[221] Footwear and clothing were also provided for indigent school children.

Throughout his years as Mayor of Christchurch, Sullivan sought to maintain personal control of part of the money collected. With this he was able to meet emergencies and deal with individuals who would only confide in him. More importantly, he was able to extend assistance in situations where the conservative members of the relief association would have refused, possibly thereby precipitating a riot. For example, he allocated some funds to the would-be revolutionaries of Lewis Pass Camp No. 2 when they arrived in the city destitute.[222] On another occasion Sullivan provided assistance to some workers from the Rapaki section of the Summit Road who had declared their own "wet day". This prompted one Fendalton citizen to protest that collections had been made for indigent

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220. Times, 11 September, 1934.

221. Times, 11 May, 1934; Secretary of MRA to Sullivan, 25 September, 1935, Christchurch City Council Mayoral Correspondence.

222. Sun, 12 March, 1934.

families, especially those affected by sickness, not for strikers. In reply Sullivan emphasised what he saw as the dual role of the relief effort - to keep the peace as well as to relieve distress;

> Danger has threatened on many occasions and I have tried both tact and concession to ward it off and thus preserve the peace and the people's property. Surely the expenditure of £25 or £50 is worthwhile to avoid such trouble. Revolutionaries amongst the unemployed do not thank me for this but, on the contrary, declaim me as their greatest enemy, but I do feel that I am entitled to recognition of my motives by responsible citizens and those motives are recognised and approved by the highest national authorities in the country.[223]

In meeting possible threats to order in this way, Sullivan was able to draw on a wide range of resources as mayor, member of parliament and the patron of several charities. By remaining open to approaches by publicly hostile individuals he was able to encourage their reformation. For example, R. MacDonald, a young communist, proved a considerable nuisance to Sullivan during 1933 and 1934 by organising demonstrations and campaigning against Labour in the municipal elections. Nevertheless, he was provided with "a good deal of help...for reasons connected with the maintenance of peace in the city".[224] With an eye to mutual advantage, Sullivan approached a number of private and public employers outside Christchurch when the young rebel confided in him that he wished to find a job and save to get married. "After a good deal of effort and trouble" MacDonald was found a place in a PWD camp near Wairoa. A council officer saw him

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223. Sullivan to Newton, Christchurch City Council, Outward Correspondence, 25 June, 1934.

224. Letter marked "Confidential". Sullivan to Niven, Ibid., 3 July, 1934.

on his way with his ticket paid for and a small sum for expenses. Some months later the Mayor was rewarded for his generosity with the news that the lost sheep had "returned to the Labour fold" and was working hard for the party's victory in the coming general election.[225]

Another strategy which tended to limit the influence of radical leaders of the unemployed was the sponsorship of rival organisations by Labour supporters. The formation of the RWU in April, 1932, and the Canterbury Unemployed Workers' Association (CUWA) during 1933 were clearly attempts to weaken the radical UWM.[226] However, members of that organisation were not excluded from the CUWA and were to become active within it.

Efforts to mobilise workers in support of unemployed organisations sometimes involved violence. One former boxer from Australia was said to have earned the title "Basher Bill" for his persuasive ways during the relief strike of 1932.[227] During 1933 a man died as a result of a confrontation over industrial action on the Rapaki section of the Summit Road, a job notorious for its radical element and lack of supervision.[228] An unemployed farm manager punched a colleague who called him a "scab" for continuing to work in defiance of a UWA decision to knock off for the day, probably to hold an unofficial stopwork meeting. The unionist, an unemployed bricklayer and former seaman named Banks, fell over a low wall and several feet down the hillside, breaking

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225. MacDonald to Sullivan, 12 August, 1935, Christchurch City Council Mayoral Correspondence.

226. Press, 4 March, 1933.

227. Sun, 21 June, 1932.

228. Times, 5, 6 May, 1933; Sun, 13, 14 March, 1934.

his neck. His assailant was found guilty of manslaughter but was sentenced to only a month's imprisonment. There must be considerable doubt whether the sentence would have been so light had the role in the assault been reversed.

Bans on outdoor demonstrations appear to have removed the opportunity for a repetition of the riots of 1932 in other main centres. The Labour council did not impose such a ban in Christchurch and it was repeatedly faced with gatherings which might have led to disorder. This possibility became particularly grave early in 1935 when an agitation centred on the system of providing charity from depots became directed at Sullivan himself.

Strong and organised criticism of the relief system had begun as early as 1933 with the formation of an Anti-charity League. This movement gained significant support amongst relief workers.[229] There had also been repeated allegations of corruption against staff at the central relief depot.[230] These led to formal inquiries into the operation of the depot and some changes. From the winter of 1934 up to the municipal elections of 1935, demonstrations against the personnel and the existence of the depot system again became severe. This agitation was largely inspired by an alliance of Independent Labour, Socialist and Communist leaders operating through the

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229. Press, 7 August, 1934.

230. Some of these allegations appear to have had strong foundation. See Simpson, op.cit., p.74, on pilfering by staff. Also MacIntosh to Sullivan, 26 June, 1935, Christchurch City Council Mayoral Correspondence. There were also persistent rumours of sexual misconduct. Simpson, op.cit., p.72; Sullivan to Secretary, Christchurch Branch of National Council of Women, Christchurch City Council, Outward Correspondence, 13 March, 1934. Also Eames to Sullivan, Ibid., 14 March, 1934, on "unpleasant rumours" and interviews on the provision of women's clothing.

CUWA, an organisation which they had come to dominate. In October, 1934, two hundred relief workers managed to invade the deserted Council Chamber. They burlesqued Sullivan's reported attempts to bring A.E. Armstrong to order by ringing the bell and draped a red flag over the Mayoral chair.[231] Early in the new year, A.E. Armstrong and his allies led a drive to destroy the relief system and thereby force the government to provide increased pay and rations.[232] They succeeded in detaining the Prime Minister, George Forbes, in Government Buildings at a time when he wanted to rejoin the visiting Duke of Gloucester and his party.[233] Desperate to get away, Forbes appears to have promised additional help to the unemployed - possibly in the form of a transfer of funds from the MED.[234] In the event only £850 was distributed to the relief workers and then the central depot was effectively closed for three weeks.[235] When it reopened, relief workers were no longer supplied, but the MRA had £2,000 from MED funds to carry on its work.[236] During the council debate on these transfers, Sullivan was roundly abused by two hundred men and women in the galleries.[237] The police were

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231. Press, 20 October, 1934.

232. Times, 17, 19 January, 1935. The shock-troops appear to have been some Rapaki relief workers. Sun, 17 January, 1935.

233. Times, 22 January, 1935.

234. Sun, 22 January, 1935. The reported request from Forbes was very vague - "asking that the men be given any food or money which could be spared".

235. Sun, 25 January, 1935. The MRA was reimbursed from the MED. Times, 29 January, 1925.

236. Times, 23, 31 January, 1935; Sun, 23 February, 1935.

237. Press, 26 February, 1935. Armstrong had been proposing that control of the funds be transferred to a committee with three members of the CUWA and three members of the Council. Times, 26 February, 1935.

called in. As the crowd left, many sang the Red Flag. Armstrong called Sullivan "Hitler" and his supporters added terms such as "traitor", "twister" and "liar".[238] Sullivan was "obviously deeply moved".[239] It is difficult to escape the conclusion of one newspaper that this was a base form of ingratitude.[240] In March a large outdoor protest was held in Latimer Square with strong communist involvement.[241] There were also demonstrations by groups of women at the central relief depot and the council chambers.[242]

Shortly after Labour's defeat in the municipal elections, a shock which in itself helped to rally the party's sympathisers, the radicals were removed from their positions of influence in the CUWA. The manner in which this ousting was achieved, and the role that Sullivan played in it, is hinted at in a somewhat disingenuous letter from the organiser of the coup to the Mayor. Having explained that he is in bed suffering from lumbago, this individual requests an allocation of coal - noting that one unemployed leader not in his group received some the day before. He continues:

> Things are moving fast now with the unemployed organisation. Armstrong and co. all resigned, this was due to tactics and methods. Fractious meetings are held in bedroom daily. As Chairman of the trade union committee along with [the committee] we [sic] will direct the organisation until things are finalised. I will be dealing with Braithwaite on Friday he is going for keeps we have the goods. Would you make

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238. Sun, 26 February, 1935.

239. Press, 26 February, 1935.

240. Sun, 26 February, 1935.

241. Press, 14 March, 1935. The Press claimed that "no more than 2000 were present". The Times said one thousand, with Rapaki men again prominent. Times, 14 March, 1935. One of the demands was "the immediate release of Ernest Thaelmann, leader of the working class in Germany".

242. Times, 12, 22 March, 1935.

> enquiry to see that my name is on the pay sheet, St. Albans council [yard] for tomorrow...Henceforth we will have a clean organisation. Could you arrange for the coal today?[243]

Sullivan also approached the Labour Department confidentially to persuade them to put another of his CUWA allies on sustenance rather than send him to camp.[244] The department complied with his request.[245]

In reality there was never any question of a "revolutionary situation" in Christchurch. The local Communist Party numbered perhaps twenty members and contained several older men with established homes and families - the tribunes rather than the troops of revolution. Sometimes the party acquired a following, even a leadership, of young men seeking direct action and confrontation. But their numbers were small. Once they were arrested and effectively isolated in Paparua Prison, the moderates took control again. There was no monolithic communist trade union movement to provide an alternative administrative structure as in some continental countries. Nor was the wider trade union movement prepared to support any revolutionary move - there was no general strike against the wage cuts or at the time of the tramway dispute. Furthermore, there was no arsenal for a revolution. Most of the civilian firepower in the city lay in the homes of the wealthy who could afford to shoot ducks and hares for sport. A few of the politically active unemployed had served in the Great War. However, most returned servicemen remained

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243. West to Sullivan, 26 June, 1935, Christchurch City Council Mayoral Correspondence.

244. Sullivan to Bromley, Christchurch City Council, Outward Correspondence, 19 July, 1935.

245. Sullivan to Bromley, Ibid., 9 September, 1935.

fairly conservative and there was no body of trained, let alone armed, men to effect a takeover of the city. On the other side of the imaginary barricades, the forces of the state were never really stretched in Christchurch. The defence of dozens of trams travelling throughout a sprawling urban area posed enormous difficulties during the tramway strike, yet it was generally successful. Over a thousand special constables came forward to supplement the local police, but neither the territorials nor the regular army were called upon to operate as units within the city.

The impact of new technology on this balance of forces should not be ignored. For example, the police were able to gather several hundred "specials" within a few hours on 6 May, 1932, without alerting those planning to attack the tramway sheds. It is difficult to see how that could have been done without the use of telephones and private motor vehicles. They were also able to rush arrested men away during the later confrontation in Cathedral Square before little tussles could turn into a riot. Lacking regular patrol cars, the local police used taxis for this work and to hurry to places where trouble was reported.[246] Motor vehicles enabled reinforcements to be brought to Lancaster Park very quickly and the police Black Maria played an important role in removing the main focus of that demonstration. Generally, the authorities could move their forces at a modern pace while their opponents were largely restricted to travel by foot and bicycle.

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246. Many of the taxis were owned by W. Hayward, a member of the CTB, Times, 8 May, 1935.

Nevertheless, the absence of a revolution in Christchurch in the 'thirties was above all due to a lack of revolutionaries. On 13 May, 1932, the crowd outside the hospital board offices was warned to stop hooting at passing trams. These individuals were amongst the most destitute in the city, presumably with nothing to lose by going to prison. And yet they complied.[247]

247. Times, 13 May, 1932.

CHAPTER NINE

CLASS

The study of class is concerned with the relationship between the separate economic roles of groups within the community and their distinct social attributes. The term "class" is used to denote a section of society with a common economic base and a shared set of values, ambition, behaviours and institutions which reflect and reinforce that base.[1] These social attributes are explained and justified by each class's ideology.[2] This special view of the world in turn explains and justifies the attitude of the class towards other classes. It legitimises those parts of the economic, social and political status quo which are in the interests of the class and serves as a basis for rejecting those aspects which are not. For a class with little power and recognition in a society, ideological rejection of the existing structure

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1. R. Bendix and S. Lipset, "Marx's Theory of Social Classes", in R. Bendix and S. Lipset (eds.), Class, Status, and Power, London, 1967, p.8, and M. Weber, "The Development of Caste", in Ibid., p.31. Also T. Bottomore, Classes in Modern Society, London, 1965, p.16.
   It is not intended to argue that class is the only determinant of a person's behaviour and beliefs. Other influences such as religion and personal relationships may also shape an individual's responses. Even class influences may be "fossilised" from a previous situation or generation - as in the case of "distressed gentlefolk". However, the linkage between class and economic forces makes the former particularly relevant to a study of depression and technological change.

2. K. Krauss, Stratification, Class and Conflict, New York, 1976, p.22.

can be extremely sweeping.[3] In most cases, the ideologies of other classes are regarded as misguided or deliberate distortions of reality - the products of ignorance or greed.

While there are normally a number of levels of status within a class,[4] it is possible for an individual to rise through them without changing his basic economic role or discarding his class values. Movement between classes, on the other hand, is generally restricted, either because it entails the acquisition of extraordinarily large amounts of capital or education, or because it involves the rejection of at least some learned values, and some of the people with whom the individual has grown up. Movement into more powerful classes normally requires a lifetime's work, or the launching of a new generation into a different class. Marriage partners, close friendships, and social activities tend to be restricted to one's own class although residual connections may remain when a person has crossed a class boundary.

Paradoxically, class conflict arises because different classes must co-exist and co-operate. No class could maintain its separate identity or its standard of living by dispensing

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3. ...it is apparent that people on the bottom are not happy with their situation. This is true even in those social orders where great inequality has been institutionalized and where the deprived show public acceptance and appropriate differential [sic] behaviour. Yet in private they exhibit strong feelings against the existing arrangements and deny their legitimacy. Krauss, op.cit., p.189.

4. "At the intra-class level, however, the emphasis upon competitive struggle gives way to a rather blander concern with the niceties of social differentiation." F. Parkin (ed.), The Social Analysis of Class Structure, London, 1974, p.1. For a strong critique of the value of occupational status rankings for overall social analysis, see A. Coxon and C. Jones, The Images of Occupational Prestige, London, 1978. The authors stress the class bias of most standard rankings and the tendency for different classes to rank occupations differently. See also Chapter Six in Class and Hierarchy, New York, 1979, by the same authors.

with all other classes because that would entail a return to a purely subsistence economy. Nevertheless, the precise distribution of social goods between different classes cannot be fixed permanently. Cyclical economic crises and technological changes are particularly likely to upset any balance before long. For example, the first wave of the Industrial Revolution led to a decline in the relative economic power of Britain's landowning aristocracy. By the end of the nineteenth century it was having to share its political power and social institutions with a substantial influx of people from successful capitalist backgrounds.[5]

Political decisions may also exacerbate class conflict as individuals in powerful positions wholeheartedly believe in the universal justice of their class values. They naturally wish to see them more amply rewarded economically and socially. Similarly, classes tend to try to impose their ideals on the rest of society through religion, education, the mass media and the law. Hence, for example, the often fierce conflict in nineteenth century Britain between an established church largely dominated by the aristocracy and a capitalist and working-class non-conformity.[6]

The customary division of modern societies into two distinct classes, capitalist and workers, appears inappropriate to the case of Christchurch between the wars. The ownership of income-earning property was so widespread that individuals who described themselves as "working men" or as the proper representatives of the working class, and who were

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5. H. Perkin, The Origins of Modern English Society, 1780-1880, London, 1969, ch. 7, 8, 9.

6. Ibid., p.347-64.

apparently accepted as such by other working people, could let houses, speculate in land, hold mortgages or have a thousand pounds in the bank.

Percy Wilson Sharpe, a leading Labour city councillor from 1927 until his death in 1930, had been a successful cordial manufacturer in Australia and New Zealand up to his retirement in 1922.[7] He lived in a large house in fashionable Bank's Avenue and had visited Britain in 1924 to take an active part in the General Election. The son of a coal-miner and a coal-miner himself for a while, no-one seems to have questioned his integrity in attacking capitalism while drawing a large income from investments. Yet he was recognised as a man of firm labour principles and was active in the No More War Movement. Four years before his death in 1930, he had acquired property in Richmond for subdivision.[8] The man with a thousand pounds in the Post Office applied for relief work but was rejected.[9] This was regarded as a case where a working man was penalised for his thrift. Another member of the unemployed was shocked to be prosecuted for collecting fifty shillings worth of relief from a depot while having £345 in the Post Office.[10] It was not unknown for relief workers to be letting houses to others.[11] Amongst

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7. Information from Press, 5 March, 27, 30 June, 1930; Times, 13 March, 1930; Star, 29 March, 1930; Sun, 5 April, 1930.

8. Christchurch City Council, Outward Correspondence, 25 January, 1926.

9. Sun, 30 June, 1931.

10. Star, 20 September, 1927.

11. Some wrote to their Labour representatives asking for guidance. Christchurch City Council, Outward Correspondence, 19 October, 18 November, 1931; Howard Papers 980/28, 980/39.

those people holding mortgages in Christchurch in 1925 were a young trade union secretary prominent in the Labour Party, and a number of labourers.[12]

Clearly these individuals did not reject the cardinal principle of capitalism, the right to make money by investing money rather than by working. They remained "working people" by continuing to follow their trades, by the way they talked and behaved, and probably by the way they voted. True, the image of a society split between the archetypal capitalist and the stereotyped worker was evident, particularly at election meetings in working areas. It served to dramatise politics, turning the contest into a clash between the forces of Good and Evil. A precise definition of the "capitalistic principle" being rejected in these political soap operas would have been counterproductive. Large numbers of workers and many of Labour's representatives would have had to change their ways to remain on the side of Right. In the workplace, the area where the economic interests of different classes met most clearly, the most constant conflict was between white-collar employees and wage-earners, both skilled and unskilled.

At least five classes can be discerned in interwar Christchurch society in accordance with the above definition: capitalists, professionals, white-collar workers, the independent working class and labourers.[13] Each had its own economic

12. Mortgages registered with the Christchurch Supreme Court during 1925, bundles numbered 163 and 164.

13. The concept of a number of classes in modern society, rather than just two or three, has a strong pedigree. Marx himself talked of "wage-labourers, capitalists and landlords" as "the three great social classes", not the only ones. K. Marx, Capital, Chicago, 1909, vol.III, ch. xlii, p.1038-40, quoted in Perkin, op.cit., p.253. Marx himself apparently used the term "class" to describe nine different social groups while analysing political and economic developments in various countries during his lifetime. S. Ossowski (translated by S. Patterson) Class Structure in the Social Consciousness, London, 1963, p.81-2.

base and typical values associated with that base. Each seems to have recognised a number of status levels within its own ranks, based not on specific occupations but on the achievement of class ideals. Each class appears to have been concentrated in certain suburbs, though with substantial overlaps between classes with roughly similar incomes and generally compatible values.

Stated occupations is a general rather than precise indication of a person's class in this scheme. This is partly due to imprecision in contemporary occupational descriptions. The title "engineer" could, for example, denote membership of a number of classes; probably skilled, possibly professional and conceivably capitalist. That of "accountant" was generally applied to a white-collar occupation, roughly equivalent to book-keeper or accounts clerk, but could describe a professional public accountant. A similar ambiguity arises when trades such as those of grocer, boot-maker or confectioner were applied to the owners of large enterprises rather than tradesmen. Luckily the major employers are generally well-known as most large enterprises were still practically, as well as nominally, family firms. Nevertheless, some major capitalists may have been hidden by the growing tendency for the wealthy to have salaried positions, such as manager, as well as their investment incomes. More importantly, a doctor or lawyer could be a large landowner, with income from the practice of his profession only a small part of his total income. Similarly, it is very difficult to judge whether a manager employed for a long time in an industry should be regarded as a white-collar worker or a professional. Classification on the basis of occupation is

best regarded as descriptive in the mass rather than for all individuals so described.

The capitalist class may be roughly defined as those who drew most of their income from the possession of capital assets rather than their own labour. Typically they had other people working under their authority, either directly or indirectly through the ownership of company shares. For this reason workers tended to refer to it as the "employer" or "employing" class. However, some capitalist received their income from rents, mortgages or trading in property without employing anyone permanently. Retired working people living on the income from savings accumulated during a life-time's labour can generally be excluded from this definition. Far from "going up in the world", they had normally taken a substantial drop in income on retirement.[14] Similarly, many tradesmen and shop-keepers could employ few staff without changing class because they continued to work alongside their employees. Within the urban workplace the most obvious feature of movement into the capitalist class tended to be separation from the work process itself, the retreat into a separate office and a purely supervisory role. Such a withdrawal marked a practical as well as a symbolic separation from the experience of working people.

Ironically an emphasis on work pervaded the ideal which the capitalist class cherished and which it had, to a large extent, succeeded in imposing on the rest of society. It was based on the myth of the "self-made man".[15] Allegedly possessing only his labour and his wits, this individual was

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14. Census, 1926, vol.XI, p.2, 36.

15. Perkin, op.cit., p.221-30.

supposed to have used both to the full and to have deprived himself of present pleasures in order to reinvest his income. Interest and dividends were thus presented as a reward for hard work and self-denial which had benefitted the whole community be permitting investment in new productive capacity. Wage and salary earners were exhorted to follow the same path. Most proved somehow to lack the necessary qualities to achieve wealth, but their readiness to work hard, to accept self-deprivation and to acknowledge the superior social value of their employers could make then model employees.

The capitalist ideal had gained a considerable currency in New Zealand during the nineteenth centruy. Not only was it becoming the dominant ideology in Britain, the principal source of immigrants and culture, it was fostered by local conditions. The rapid economic development of the country had presented great opportunities to individuals with entrepreneurial drive, even those with little capital. In particular, the value of assets cheaply acquired often quickly appreciated as the population increased rapidly and as improved transport facilities and technological change opened vast new markets overseas.

Rural and frontier New Zealand provided the greatest range of opportunities, particularly for unskilled workers. Land development and land speculation, new forms of farming, gold-mining, timber-milling and labour contracting all offered chances to begin small and grow. The sub-division of land holdings by the Liberal Government had also contributed to the quota of rural "self-made men" who moved into land ownership and often then into politics. Such success stories were more common in the North Island, where the development of farming had been more spectacular since the eighteen-

eighties.[16] William Massey himself, Prime Minister between 1912 and 1925, had been employed as a "servant" on a Canterbury estate prior to finding his fortune as a land-owner in Auckland.[17] Nevertheless, Christchurch's rural hinterland could also furnish a number of famous examples. The most prominent of these was undoubtedly George Forbes, M.P. for Hurunui, leader of the Nationalist Party in 1925 and Prime Minister from 1930 to 1935. He had built up a large and profitable farm near Cheviot after winning a section in one of the Liberal Government's land ballots. Forbes' family background was hardly poverty-stricken - his father was a substantial ships' chandler and merchant in Lyttelton - but the image of a progress from shop-boy to sheepfarmer and from a tent to the House of Representatives was cherished. George Witty, Liberal M.P. for Riccarton between 1902 and 1925, and then Member of the Legislative Council, was another local example. Arriving from England in 1875 with only a village school education and apparently little capital, he "started milking and with threshing machine". Twenty years later the development of a series of farms had left him with sufficient leisure to serve on a wide range of local bodies and then in parliament. Jeremiah Connolly, Independent Coalition United M.P. for Mid-Canterbury between 1931 and 1935, rose from a relatively humble farming background to acquire large estates and the Cheviot Homestead. The legend that a hard-working individual could make his fortune and not just provide cheap labour for farmers by going into the

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16. Unless otherwise specified the following biographical accounts are derived from G. Scholefield, Who's Who in New Zealand, Wellington, 1932.

17. S. Eldred-Grigg, A Southern Gentry, Wellington, 1980, p.136.

country was still widely held, especially amongst older men. In the late 'twenties the unemployed were frequently exhorted to follow this path, and in 1928 both United and Labour candidates were pointing to their parties' land settlement policies partly to appeal to these sentiments.[18]

However, examples of entrepreneurial success were not limited to the rural hinterland. Within Christchurch itself there was a continuing demand for the services of builders and contractors as the city grew. Improvements in communications during the late nineteenth century, particularly the construction of railways and roads, combined with population growth to create a substantial market for Christchurch manufacturers within a relatively short period. Distance from overseas producers and customs duties, initially for revenue purposes, further widened the opportunities for local industrialists. Consequently many of the city's most prominent citizens had been able to rise from comparatively humble beginnings - typically as skilled or white-collar rather than unskilled workers - to become major employers. They could be cited (and frequently cited themselves) as living proof of the capitalist ideal. Henry Holland, mayor of the city between 1911 and 1918, and Reform M.P. for Christchurch North from 1925 to 1935, was a machinery merchant and owner of an engineering works who was reported to have begun his business pushing a cart about the city.[19] He had been elected to the mayoralty as a Labour candidate. John Anderson, the pioneer blacksmith who had built up a large foundry and whose son was sufficiently accepted by the elite to become a director of the

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18. Times, 18 May, 1928; Sun, 22 August, 1928.

19. Information from the late Leo Greer, of Bryndwr.

the Christchurch Press Company, had also become one of Christchurch's "self-made" legends.[20] George Penfold, another blacksmith who founded a large engineering works, was said to have carried his own anvil over the Bridle Path from Lyttelton.[21] Thomas Edmonds, the baking powder magnate and prominent civic benefactor, had begun business in Christchurch as a self-employed grocer.[22] In common with many other manufacturers, he appears to have been regarded with a special respect by Christchurch working people, not just for his success and his public generosity,[23] but for the manner in which he had provided steady and well-paid employment for so many of them.

The capitalist class and capitalist values were clearly dominant in Christchurch society by the 'twenties. Editorials in all four local newspapers were consistently strongly critical of trade unions which went on strike and they were strongly opposed to the Labour Party. The presence of endemic competition between classes, and sometimes even their separate existence, were frequently denied.[24] Industrial disputes were

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20. John Anderson, the only tradesman blacksmith among Canterbury's first four shiploads of settlers, possessed a rare combination of technical knowledge and ability. Such talent, coupled with tremendous energy and character, manifested itself within seven short years... G. Tait and A. Samuel (eds.), Industry and Commerce in New Zealand, Auckland, 1961, p.119.

21. Information from the writer's mother, Mrs I.E. Watson, who lived opposite the Penfolds as a child.

22. "The success story of T.J. Edmonds blends well with the history of New Zealand. It typifies both the growth of a robust young country and faith in its economic future." G. Tait and A. Samuel (eds.), Manufacturing in New Zealand, Auckland, 1959, p.13-15.

23. Amongst his gifts to the city were a clock tower, a park, a telephone booth and a band rotunda. He was also a major contributor to relief funds during the 'twenties and 'thirties.

24. See criticism of the term "idle rich". Press, 6 February, 1926. "We are all workers and labourers in these days", declared Dr H.D.T. Ackland in 1935. Times, 27 April, 1935.

commonly blamed on professional troublemakers, supposedly supported by Russian Gold.[25] Pronouncements from the Canterbury Chamber of Commerce, Employers' Association, Industrial Association or the North Canterbury Farmers' Union were generally treated as authoritative. All the newspapers criticised government "interference" in business and were generally unhappy about proposals for further state or municipal enterprises.[26] Their chosen targets tended to vary according to the particular sector of the economy it represented. Thus government intervention to assist the farming industry was generally welcomed by the Press while it attacked the protection of "artificial" secondary industries.[27] The Sun reversed these priorities.[28]

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25. Press, 12 January, 25 November, 1926. In 1932 the Star blamed the Auckland disturbances on "agitators in New Zealand who are paid with Russian gold to organise syndicalist ebullitions of this nature". Star, 15 April, 1932.

26. The Press was strongest on this subject: "In every direction one sees State Departments moving towards the enslavement of an unreflecting people". Press, 6 January, 1926. See attacks on the Post Office Savings Bank (19 June, 1926), the Public Trust (21, 29 June, 14, 20 July, 1926) and Railways Department (24 November, 1926). The Times strongly criticised dairy control (21 July, 1926), and government by regulation (2 February, 11, 13 May, 1926) and "state interference" generally (24 March, 1926). The Sun took a similar line. Sun, 27 September, 1927. The Star attacked the Coates Government for its numerous regulations. Star, 11, 15 May, 1926.

27. This paradox can be most clearly seen in the debate over proposed duties on wheat and flour in 1926. The Press advocated protection for the wheat-grower. When "one of the newspaper organs of urban radicalism" mentioned that one miller had threatened to close his mill if duties were imposed, the Press suggested that that would lead to demands for "the establishment of a State flour mill on a large scale". Press, 11 January, 1926. For typical attacks on protection for secondary industry, see Press, 13 January, 16, 17 February, 27 April, 1926.

28. Sun, 6 September, 1926. Earlier the same newspaper had talked of "bucolic politics...sweetened propaganda from Tory pleaders, erudite professors, converted bankers, and itinerant expert". It called for development of secondary industries on the Australian model, i.e. with high tariff protection. Sun, 29 June, 1926. The Times took a similar line in milder terms. Times, 5, 17 February, 23 April, 1926. The Star agreed on the need for greater "national self-reliance". Star, 1 April, 1927.

With a few notable exceptions such as the Rev. J.K. Archer, most churchmen concentrated on improving personal morality and behaviour, and dispensing charity rather than criticising the distribution of income and power in their society. Wealthy capitalists were often leading members of their churches, helping to supervise the income-earning investments which supported them.

Prominent social and service organisations like the Plunket Society, the Red Cross, Freemasons, Rotary, YMCA, YWCA, Automobile Association, Progress League, and the local Jockey and Trotting Clubs were all dominated by capitalists. The latter were also prominent on the boards of governors of the Canterbury University College and Christchurch Technical Institute. They were particularly likely to be appointed Justices of the Peace and to serve on government-appointed committees inquiring into aspects of their industries. The highest ceremonial honours were sometimes accorded to them; as in Britain, New Zealand knights now tended to win their spurs in the bank or the brewery rather than on the battlefield.

Capitalists dominated the two political parties, Reform and Liberal (Nationalist, United), which won a majority of the votes cast in the Christchurch Urban Area throughout the 'twenties. They held most of the parliamentary seats in the province and an overwhelming majority of those in the dominion as a whole. Up to 1927 those with business interests had controlled all the local authorities in Christchurch, as in every other city in New Zealand. Their greatest challenge had come in city council elections since 1911, but candidates standing in their interests had consistently won two-thirds of the seats.

During the nineteenth century there had been substantial resistance to the growth of capitalist power and prestige from large landowners with some claim to membership in the British aristocratic class.[29] By 1926, however, they appear to have largely melted into the upper ranks of the local capitalist and professional classes.[30] Others had returned to Britain or moved to other parts of the Empire where prestigious military, diplomatic and judicial posts - the strongholds of the aristocracy - abounded. With Canterbury they still set the tone (and the accent) for the leading elements of the new ruling classes.[31] However, the mythology of their early days in the settlement had a strongly entrepreneurial flavour. The cult of "the pioneers", preserved cob huts and former homesteads no bigger than cottages helped to establish a history of genteel hardship which justified the present wealth of their descendants.[32] The implication tended to be that the early runholders had done most of the physical labour of land development themselves, a decidedly misleading picture. Similarly, stationowners and runholders had generally taken

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29. "There was a significant dash of blue blood among South Island landowners". S. Eldred-Grigg, A Southern Gentry, Wellington, 1980, p.75-79. The economic interests of the large landowners lay primarily (though not exclusively) with exporting, importing or investments overseas. Ibid., p.111-17, 143-45; and S. Eldred-Grigg, "Whatever Happened to the Gentry", in NZJH, vol.II, no.1, April, 1977, p.24. For this reason the term "colonial elite" has been used to describe them in this thesis.

30. Ibid., p.21. However, popular memories were not short. Making her first public speech during the 1935 municipal election campaign, Mrs E. Parlane, a Labour candidate declared that Dr H.D.T. Acland "would be the lord - he is the lord now - of an aristocratic council". She described him as "a member of your aristocracy". Sun, 4 April, 1935.

31. They still tended to be by far the wealthiest people in the province. For example, the estate of G.D. Greenwood was declared at "under £750,000 in 1932". Sun, 29 August, 1932.

32. See series of articles on "The Pilgrims" and "The Early Days", beginning Press, 30 June, 1930.

to describing themselves as "sheepfarmers" or even just "farmers". These terms had previously been shunned by the gentry in New Zealand, as in Britain, and had been used to describe working farmers, typically tenants. Now the title was being used as a rallying-point against the forces of trade unionism and socialism. The most obvious and most conscious opposition to the capitalist ideal was now coming from within the working class.

Despite its apparent dominance, the capitalist class was already losing ground in Christchurch well before the depression. The pace of economic development in New Zealand had slowed, restricting opportunities for entrepreneurs. This was particularly true of Canterbury and most of the South Island - would-be capitalists were well-advised to go north. At the same time, the larger population, increased urbanisation and improved technology had opened alternative avenues for young men who aspired to power and prestige. Government service was the greatest of these, but there was now also a firmly based trade union movement and a political party open to ambitious working youths. Moreover, whereas fifty years earlier a man was best advised to accumulate as much capital as possible if he wanted economic security, now there were many more "safe" jobs with central and local government, and with big private organisations. Furthermore, firms which had been built up by "self-made men" during Christchurch's industrialisation from the eighteen-seventies onwards were being passed on to their children by the nineteen-twenties. Those of them who took an active interest in the family business might retain some of their father's kudos as they continued with the mysterious but obviously prodigiously difficult and

inadequately rewarded work of keeping the firm profitable. However, it was clearly their inheritance of capital that had given them their wealth and authority.

The new electrical and motor technology did create new opportunities for entrepreneurs. Amongst those in Christchurch who successfully rode the new wave was Harry Urlwin, who founded a large local business manufacturing and selling cheap domestic electrical appliances during the 'twenties.[33] An immigrant who had arrived in New Zealand as a teenager before the Great War, Urlwin had only had a limited education and had worked in a variety of unskilled occupations, including a stint as boot-boy in a hotel. Starting from a more financially secure background, Tracy Gough began to build his Christchurch based machinery empire during the early 'thirties. In 1933 James Hay floated a company to purchase the local assets of MacKay, Logan and Co., his erstwhile employers.[34] He then developed a department store whose popularity soon rivalled all others in Christchurch and formed the basis for a South Island chain. Miller, a Christchurch textile and clothing merchant, introduced mechanised mass-production into the local "rag trade" between 1930 and 1934, utilising the speed of electrical sewing machines on a large scale.[35] All these entrepreneurs appreciated the value of vigorous promotional campaigns. Gough, for instance, made use of films supplied by Caterpillar Ltd., the American manufacturers of most of the machinery he sold.[36] Hay's store became famous

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33. Press, 9 July, 1983.

34. Sun, 25 November, 1933.

35. Star, 12 May, 1934.

36. Sullivan to Manager, Gough, Gough, and Hamer, Christchurch City Council, Outward Correspondence, 4 November, 1936.

for the entertainment it provided for the children of its customers with a playground on the roof, an annual christmas parade and "Aunt Haysl" playing the role of a perennial Mother Christmas.

Nevertheless, much of the new technology was controlled by large international firms such as Shell, British Imperial, Ford, General Motors, Caterpillar, McCormick-Deering and Electrolux. These either set up their own New Zealand operations or looked for local entrepreneurs with established distribution networks or sufficient capital to create them rapidly. The second wave of industrialisation here was inclined to be less spontaneous, more managed by its overseas creators.

Other pre-depression developments tended to shake the prestige of the capitalist class and their ideology. Many capitalists, particularly those owning farms, had done very well out of the Great War. "Cost-plus" requisitioning and the commandeer on New Zealand's pastoral exports had guaranteed profits and greatly increased the value of land. Simultaneously, working people faced a substantial fall in their real wages. This seemed to undermine the traditional capitalist argument that they worked to benefit all society by increasing production and profits. That such gains were made during a war in which so many local sons enthusiastically volunteered or were conscripted and died overseas added to the sense of outrage. These sentiments appear to have contributed substantially to the New Zealand Labour Party's electoral breakthrough in 1919.[37] The scope of central direction during

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37. E. Plumridge, Labour in Christchurch: Community and Consciousness, 1914-1919, unpublished M.A. thesis, Canterbury University, 1979, p.191-93.

the war effort, its financing and its success also gave its socialist opponents powerful new ammunition. The inevitable objection to their schemes, "but where's the money to come from", could now be answered, effectively if imprecisely, "there was plenty of money for war". This parallel became a recurring theme in Labour calls for government action to combat unemployment. The immediate post-war boom in farm properties, fueled by government loans to returned servicemen, probably made a few fortunes and certainly drew speculators from a wide section of society. However, the disappointment which followed brought much disillusionment, particularly for soldier-settlers who were forced to walk off the properties in which they had invested their hopes as well as their capital. Some speculators and those landowners who had sold at the height of the boom made money while new producers were fortunate to struggle on under a load of debt.

But it was the depression itself which shook the moral leadership of capitalism most severely. Instead of the traditional sharp cyclical downturn of twelve months or so, the economic crisis proved to be exceptionally intractable. The self-righting mechanisms of capitalist theory appeared to be no longer operating. Conservative economists might blame this on undue government interference in finance and trade, but in the absence of international co-operation and the presence of democratic governments their laissez-faire solutions were largely irrelevant. In most countries there were loud calls for more protection, deflation or inflation through the manipulation of government spending, state subsidies for producers and special arrangements to control prices by limiting "overproduction". Leading capitalists were amongst

the most enthusiastic advocates of these policies.[38]

The cherished capitalist image of "private enterprise" had long been compromised in New Zealand. The new country lacked the accumulated capital and the population to make the provision of many modern services possible privately. Consequently whereas railways, gas, electricity, water-supply and even roading had been promoted by private capital in Britain, here they generally fell to central and local government. The building and construction sector looked anxiously for government contracts in these fields and had benefitted greatly from state advances to workers, while the dominion's manufacturers jealously guarded their tariff protection. Now New Zealand capitalism produced easily its fair share of "currency cranks" and other folks who simply wanted to crank up the currency.

Canterbury's farmer-capitalists were generally enthusiastic supporters of devaluation. At a meeting in the Addington Saleyards in 1932 a large number of them debated the size of the proposed depreciation in something akin to an auction. They eventually agreed that a forty per cent increase in their monetary incomes would seem fair.[39] No attention appears to have been paid to the possible effects on the rest of the community. Other capitalists, rural and urban, looked to Douglas Social Credit to correct anomalies which they believed had arisen in the capitalist system. Often "the Major's" supporters were progressive young

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38. D. Aldcroft, The Inter-War Economy: Britain, 1919-1938, London, 1970, ch.9. The Sun recognised this trend when it took the Canterbury Chamber of Commerce to task for continued attacks on "State intervention": "It knows, or should know, that private traders the world over are forced, because of the changed situation, to depend increasingly on government championship and support". Sun, 14 July, 1934.

39. Sun, 23 November, 1932.

businessmen enthusiastic about the development of new technology. For example, the president of the local Douglas Social Credit League was Alan Allardyce, a radio enthusiast who broadcast New Zealand's first commentaries of rugby matches and horse races. Such people wanted to see the development of a modern monetary system to encourage the spread of new technology and to exploit the increase in productivity it promised. However, despite Social Credit's unequivocal support for the capitalist producer against the banks, it signified a further compromise on capitalist ideology. The creation of a Credit Authority, whatever its composition, meant central control of the very life-blood of capitalism.

Other forward-thinking capitalists who refused to enlist in the army of Major Douglas were sometimes prone to do a little economic engineering of their own. Having played an active role in the public condemnation of the coalition's manipulation of the exchange rate, Sidney Holland proceeded to devise a whole new monetary system for the subsequent parliamentary inquiry into banking and finance.[40] His scheme was based on the issue of coupons in return for labour. The coupons were to be destroyed once they had been cashed for goods. Similarly, the argument that the government should "do something" to increase the purchasing power of ordinary people found strong support with businessmen such as James Hay who were selling goods to those people.[41]

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40. W. Sutch, The Quest for Security in New Zealand, 1840-1966, Wellington, 1966, p.174.

41. Times, 25 July, 1933. Hay took a strong line on the need for the churches to investigate social questions in an address to the Presbyterian Social Services Association of which he was a very active member:

> No longer can the Church dissociate itself from the urgent problems that confront us...and it should be concerned with the causes which have brought about this distress rather than dealing solely with the effects. Star-Sun, 31 October, 1935.

The capitalist class in New Zealand became bitterly divided over the extent and direction of government intervention. In Christchurch the Sun and the Star, newspapers which generally represented the interests of city capitalists, lambasted the farmer-dominated government steadily between 1931 and 1935.[42] Similarly, the extent of the coalition's electoral disaster in the latter year can be partly ascribed to the rise of the Democrats. Their appeal was principally to those capitalists, such as mortgagees and importers, who had suffered most from the government's benevolence towards its farming supporters.[43] Such figures and self-interested disunity amongst capitalists was not a spectacle calculated to increase their public prestige.

Meanwhile, the depression was tending to undermine confidence in capital accumulation as the avenue to security. While mortgagees saw the value of their investments shrink and even disappear, mortgagors lost their equity. Income from mortgages, debentures and savings were arbitrarily reduced. At the most basic level some people lost most of their capital stock of goods - house, furniture and even clothes. The

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42. See, for example, the criticism of the New Zealand Meat Producers' Board's evidence to the Tariff Commission:

> The farmers come first. It does not matter what happens to any other section of the community as long as the farmers are protected to the utmost.
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> Now, there is a widespread feeling in the country that enough has been done already for the farmers. They have had an extraordinarily fair deal from the Government... The result is that there are now intense feelings of hostility against the farming interests. Sun, 19 October, 1933.

The Star could be even harsher - "Once again it is the backbone of the country that needs propping up. Only farmers are to benefit". Star, 9 February, 1935. It called the increased exchange rate "a surrender of cabinet to the agricultural interests" (20 January, 1933) and claimed that "Mr Coates' brand of socialism, like high exchange, aims at an unequal distribution for the benefit of a section" (26 October, 1934),

43. There was particularly loud applause for H. Hislop, the Democrat leader, when he declared at a Christchurch meeting that the Sales tax would go when his party came to power. Star-Sun, 1 November, 1935.

wisdom of "saving for a rainy day" seemed to be vanishing in the face of an economic Little Ice Age. Government assistance appeared increasingly more relevant than capitalist self-reliance.

The professional class was well-positioned to occupy much of the ground which capitalism had proven unable to fill. Despite its essentially protean nature, the characteristics of this class, its interests and its ideology were evident in New Zealand by the 'twenties.

Precise definition of the term "professional" is difficult.[44] Some of the attributes traditionally ascribed it to, such as self-employment and the use of a fixed scale of charges for services, were already outdated in the 'twenties as increasing numbers of doctors and lawyers were taking up salaried positions in the state services. As with the skilled trades, the ultimate allegiance of the professional is theoretically supposed to be to the principles of his profession rather than to self-interest or to an employer. In most cases, but certainly not all, his work is open to judgement by a tribunal chosen from amongst distinguished fellow members of the profession and legally empowered to prevent him practising.[45] The special legal status often accorded

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44. Much of the definition described below derives from H. Perkin, op.cit., p.252-270, a section entitled appropriately "The Forgotten Middle Class". Also Professionalism, Property and English Society Since 1880, Reading, 1981, the Stenton Lecture delivered by the same author.

45. Perkin stresses the "fiduciary" nature of professionalism:
> ...the essence of a profession is the provision of an esoteric, evanescent, fiduciary service - salvation, litigation, medical advice, education, financial control, administration, or even engineering (when the final test involves loss of life) - which is beyond the immediate judgement of the non-professional, cannot easily be pinned down or faulted even when it fails to achieve the desired result, and must therefore be taken on trust. Perkin, Professionalism..., p.8.

such tribunals and the stress on authoritative rather than majority decisions separates these proceedings from those of trade unions. Probably the most obvious factor typifying the modern professional is a prolonged formal education, usually including full-time attendance at an academy where both the written knowledge and the ethics of the profession are supposed to be imparted in a controlled environment.[46] At the very least a professional needs a good command of written language; an illiterate professional is as difficult to envisage as an illiterate clerk. He must also be able to grasp abstract concepts and principles, the existence of which are a hallmark of professionalism. Finally, unlike the entrepreneur, the professional always claims to represent the interests of someone or something other than himself; the doctor his patient, the lawyer his client, the clergyman his congregation, the public servant the government, the architect and the engineer those who commission them, the professor his students.

It is often tempting to try to judge when a politician or a trade unionists ceases to be representative of the class from which he springs and becomes a professional representative instead, reluctant and perhaps unable to return to his origins. Faced with the loss of their positions or the prospect of professional advancement, such individuals may well abandon their erstwhile colleagues. Perhaps the best-known New Zealand example of this during the 'thirties was the career of Walter Bromley. An English coalminer with only a primary school education, Bromley rose through positions on the New Zealand

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46. Professions have tended to become more academically based. It would be wrong to exclude many solicitors, journalists, military and ships' officers, and engineers from this class between the wars because they had not attended a professional academy.

Amalgamated Engineers' Union to become secretary, then president, of the Wellington Trades Council, assistant secretary of the New Zealand Labour Party and a Labour parliamentary candidate. He was appointed as a workers' representative to the Unemployment Board in 1930 and became its secretary. The force behind much of the board's work, Bromley at times rivalled his mentor Gordon Coates for the title of most hated man amongst the unemployed.[47] Significantly, he retained a prominent position in the Labour Department following the change of government in 1935. A local example of the same process can be seen in the case of Hiram Hunter, secretary at various times of a number of local unions included the Drivers', Timber Workers' and Tramway Employees'. He represented Labour on the Christchurch City Council between 1911 and 1923, and contested the Mid-Canterbury seat for the party in 1931. By 1938, however, he had drifted so far from his class background that he was prepared to contest the Avon seat in opposition to Dan Sullivan, a former colleague on the United Federation of Labour and no Bolshevik.

Because their role is to articulate and represent the interests of others, it is also difficult to isolate the common interests of the professional class with precision. Professionals are traditionally the formulators and purveyors of the ideals of other classes, and amongst the strongest believers in those ideals. For example, professional economists produced the classical economic theories which raised the entrepreneur to the stature of economic hero.[48] Furthermore, the children of the rich and powerful had long dominated

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47. T. Simpson, The Sugarbag Years, Wellington, 1974, p.60-62.

48. Perkin, The Origins..., p.221-29, 319-20.

certain professions, most notably the law and the established church. Except for a fortunate few who won scholarships and gained state or academic appointments, the cost of several extra years of full-time education and of purchasing a practice tended to restrict entry to most professions to persons with wealthy backgrounds. Individuals with professional qualifications might well find themselves managing the family's business interests rather than practising. Finally, in the absence of medical benefits and legal aid, a disproportionate amount of the work of doctors and lawyers, as well as that of other professionals such as architects and engineers, was transacted with wealthy clients.

Nevertheless, the bases of the professional and capitalist classes were different, and potentially in conflict. The professional ideal was based on intellectual intelligence and education, that of the capitalist on success in the marketplace. Left to itself the market often provided quacks and charlatans with good livings, sometimes better than those of honest practitioners. Professionals therefore requested and received Acts of Parliament so that they could purge their own vocations.[49] There was little direct profit to be made by businessmen in improving urban sanitation or educating the mass of the population, so the professionals urging such innovations worked through local and central government. Although seldom socialist, they tended to respond to problems with suggestions for new legislation and regulation under the control of property, i.e. professionally qualified people. After all, the major professions of law, the civil service and

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49. Ibid., p.254-55.

the church all had their origins in the imposition of central authority. During the nineteenth century other professions had benefitted from compulsory schooling, public health regulations, official standards in engineering and laws controlling the presentation of company accounts. The power and the prospects for expansion of the professional class lay increasingly with the expansion of governmental authority. Some recognised this openly and came to constitute a Fabian element within working-class political movements. However, they tended to stress the efficiency that would come with socialism, which to them meant government by qualified and disinterested professionals. This was not at all the millennium that most working-class socialists envisaged, with its heavy emphasis on democracy and egalitarianism throughout society.

As with the Capitalist Class, the first wave of the Industrial Revolution had brought about a substantial expansion of the professional class in terms of size, importance, reputation and self-confidence. Much greater numbers of people could now afford the services of doctors, lawyers and architects. Society could support many more non-conformist clergymen, popular writers, mass political organisations, new private schools and academies, and assorted "social cranks". In short, almost the whole professional gamut. Consequently the nineteenth century witnessed great advances in legislation protecting professional standards, imposing "rational" improvements at the behest of professionals and leading to the state and local body employment of large numbers of professionally-trained experts.

The second wave of industrialisation was even more favourable to the professional class and comparatively less so

for the capitalists. This was because the growing complexity of technology was making the scientist an increasingly important figure and the individual entrepreneur of limited education much less significant. With a few exceptions, major technical progress was now the result of theoretical research and laboratory investigation rather than the products of empirical experimentation by self-taught "inventors" or factory-owners seeking to overcome production problems.[50] Large corporations which could afford to employ numbers of university-trained specialists in expensively equipped laboratories came to be the great founts of progress. It is estimated that in the United States $80 million was spent on research and development in 1920, $130 million in 1930 and $377 million in 1940.[51] Universities themselves became recognised as great centres of immediately or ultimately productive research rather than just the training-grounds of clerics, lawyers and gentlemen.

The Great War had given a fillip to this development as governments sought to produce new weapons and synthesize materials at short notice. The British government in particular came to believe that its industrial capitalists had not matched the investment of their German counterparts in many areas of research with strategic implications. One result was the establishment of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research in 1916. Moreover, the organisation of "total war" in an industrial society demanded access to a vast range of

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50. L. Hannah, Electricity Before Nationalisation, London, 1979, p.1; L. Mumford, Technics and Civilisation, London, 1947, p.217; P. Drucker, "Technological Trends in the Twentieth Century", in M. Kranzberg and C. Pursell, Technology in Western Civilisation: vol.2, Technology in in the Twentieth Century, New York, 1967, p.16.

51. E. Ginzberg, Technology and Social Change, Columbia, New York, 1964, p.47.

professional skills. Nutritionists, meteorologists and mathematicians were often as valuable as industrial chemists. Economists were called in to manipulate money and psychologists to manipulate minds. The welfare of millions of previously neglected subjects suddenly became a primary concern of the state and the demand for medical and psychiatric services multiplied rapidly. "The expert" emerged from the war with a greatly enhanced reputation.

The authorities and public opinion in New Zealand generally shared this changing perception of professionalism. The results of the dominion's enthusiastic participation in the Imperial war effort helped to make some local doctors celebrities. Dr H.T.D. Acland, a member of a colonial elite family, gained a great reputation as a surgeon during the war and it was this rather than his family background which enhanced his electoral appeal. He not only polled highly as a member of the North Canterbury Hospital Board, but nearly unseated Dan Sullivan as mayor of Christchurch in 1935. Other local doctors who converted their professional reputations into political assets during the same election were John Guthrie and Antony Sandston. Campaigns to raise money for new medical facilities were major events during the 'twenties, outstripping appeals to assist the unemployed. Such campaigns included one for the provision of new radium to the public hospital,[52] the construction of St. George's Private Hospital in Merivale,[53] and a nation-wide appeal to support research into cancer,[54] an increasingly evident killer.

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52. F.O. Bennett, Hospital on the Avon, Christchurch, 1962, p.203.

53. L. Averill, St. George's Hospital: The First Fifty Years, Christchurch 1978, p.18-35.

54. Press, 22 February, 1929.

Medicine was only one of the professions expanding rapidly in numbers and prestige, both locally and nationally. In particular, the farming industry was becoming increasingly aware of the benefits of scientific research to production. According to one farm adviser, who was later to become Director-General of Agriculture, it was during the 'twenties that

> research gave impetus to advisory work and the reorganisation and expansion of agricultural education...provided qualified people to carry out expanding programmes. In short, research and advisory work in agriculture became a recognised profession. With its expansion, recruitment of students to enter courses became an important matter of Government policy.[55]

A second agricultural college (Massey) was founded in 1923, but this did not prevent the continued growth of the first, at Lincoln, set up four decades earlier. A Master of Agricultural Science degree was introduced at both. In 1926 the Coates government established the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR) on the British model, and it soon became deeply involved in wool, soil and plant research. In 1927 a separate Wheat Research Institute was established in Christchurch under the direction of F.W. Hilgendorf. A similar Dairy Research Institute was set up in the North Island.

Other sectors were likewise turning increasingly to scientists to solve their problems. The DSIR was involved in research for secondary as well as primary industry, and also played a growing role in providing forensic evidence for the police. The latter were particularly enthusiastic about the assistance which finger-printing had given them since the Great War.[56] The State Forest Service greatly expanded its

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55. P. Smallfield, The Grasslands Revolution in New Zealand, Auckland, 1970, p.98.

56. AJHR, 1930, H 16, p.4.

research into the suitability of various exotic trees to New Zealand conditions.[57] Similarly, the explosive development of the Electricity Division of the Public Works Department and the proliferation of electrical supply authorities rapidly increased the demand for qualified electrical engineers during the 'twenties. The Health Department's medical inspection of school children expanded and the Hospital Act of 1926 extended its control over local hospital boards. A Eugenics Board was created in 1929 to investigate ways of introducing this method of "improving the race",[58] something of a bee in the professional bonnet for the past hundred years. Approaching similar problems from a different direction, the Education Department commenced its psychiatric service in 1927.[59]

The bureaucracy of central government was also becoming increasingly professional. The passage of the Public Service Act in 1912 greatly assisted this process by removing the appointment, disciplining and dismissal of civil servants from political control. The Public Service Commissioner appointed in 1922, P.D. Verschaffelt, appears to have been particularly effective in building up this professionalism. The proportion of professionally qualified individuals within the public service increased substantially during the early 'thirties.[60]

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57. A. Poole, Forestry in New Zealand, Auckland, 1969, p.21-26.

58. AJHR, 1930, H 7, p.3.

59. Star, 2, 3 March, 1927.

60. Verschaffelt put this down partly to reduced recruiting, which enabled the public service to select only the best-qualified. Simultaneously, older officers - those less likely to be professionally qualified - were retiring or being retired. By 1934, 1,041 out of 7,400 public servants had tertiary qualifications. Star, 27 April, 1934.

This was partly due to premature retirements, which reduced the number of older, unqualified staff, and to the restricted intake of new officers, which enabled the better-qualified to be chosen. However, there was also a strong trend for existing staff to acquire university training part-time. The Reichel-Tate Royal Commission on University Education in New Zealand in 1926 was surprised by the extent of such training and regarded it unfavourably. It noted that only just over half the 190 law students at Victoria University College were employed in law offices - "the remainder were mainly State servants, who had little chance of gaining practice in law in their employment".[61] This seems to have partly accounted for the fact that New Zealand had three times the number of law students for its population as New South Wales and Victoria. The Royal Commission's narrow and elitist view of university education - that its aim should be to produce a few brilliant specialists and a large number of gentlemen with a liberal education - ran counter to the trend. Yet the extent of part-time education in New Zealand arguably did more to extend respect for academics and academic education amongst other classes, especially white-collar workers, than a more selective system. Verschaffelt himself appears to have gained his Bachelor of Laws degree while in paid employment.

Professionally qualified engineers and administrators were also beginning to appear in local government positions. Probably the most striking Christchurch example was that of A.R. Galbraith, who took up the position of City Engineer in 1926. His influence was soon noticeable, with the Works' Department Annual Report expanding ten-fold in size to become

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61. H. Parton, The University of New Zealand, Auckland, 1979, p.47.

a careful survey of the department's resources and needs as well as its work.[62] He ensured that facilities and staff numbers in the Engineer's office improved at an even faster rate than the volume of the council's outside work.[63] The Town-planning Act of 1927, the beginnings of professional control and direction of development, was partly responsible for this. The Tramways Act of 1926, which gave the council the power to licence bus services within the urban area, was another example of such limitations on the play of market forces in the city.

Those nurseries of the professional class, the universities, were also expanding rapidly, largely in response to the increasing demand for their graduates. Between 1900 and 1925 the number of undergraduates in New Zealand universities had increased from 800 to 4000, and the number of staff (including part-time lecturers) from 50 to 170.[64] This trend does not appear to have been reversed by the depression. In fact, the number of full-time university lecturers in New Zealand increased from 97 in 1926 to 148 in 1936, roughly triple the overall rate of increase in the workforce.[65] The incentive to excel was also increasing. In 1900 less than one in five of those on university staffs had been trained in New Zealand; in 1925 over half.[66] Qualifications gained overseas were still

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62. Christchurch City Council, City Surveyor's Report, 1925, and City Engineer's Report, 1926.

63. In July, 1925, the Works Department had an office staff of five and an annual salary bill of £2,389. A year later it had ten office-workers costing a total of £4,532 per annum. By 1929 the staff totalled twenty and the overall administration cost was £6,089, compared with £2,370 in 1924-25. Christchurch City Council, City Engineer's Reports, 1926, 1929.

64. Parton, op.cit., p.42.

65. Census, 1926, vol.IX, p.48; 1936, vol.X, p.49, 58.

66. Parton, op.cit., p.42.

at a premium, however, and opportunities to gain them were growing as well. In 1931 six out of the seven dominion-based postgraduate and travelling scholarships available to New Zealand students had been instituted since the Great War.[67]

The development of educational and discussion groups open to the wider public but dealing with academic questions was an important symptom of, and contribution to, the growth in professional prestige. The Workers' Educational Association (WEA) was the most prominent of these. Its Christchurch branch was founded on the eve of the Great War and provided a platform for local professionals, principally university lecturers, secondary schoolteachers and clergymen.[68] It drew in people from a surprisingly wide social and political range. In 1931 the local and dominion president was H.D. Acland, the lawyer son of a colonial elite family, also president of the New Zealand Sheepowners' Federation and the Christchurch Citizens' Association, and a prominent member of the Reform Party. The dominion and local Organising Secretary was George Manning, a trade union official and a past and future Labour Party city councillor. Others active in the Christchurch association included M.E. Lyons, a Citizens' councillor and nearly successful Reform candidate in Lyttelton in 1925, and Mrs Fournier, wife of the city's most prominent communist. By

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67. G. Scholefield, Who's Who in New Zealand, Wellington, 1932, p.44-46.
68. Star, 6 May, 1927.

1927 the Christchurch WEA was running twenty-six classes, the majority of them outside the urban area.[69]

Economics was a popular subject amongst WEA students in the late 'twenties as well as in the darker days of the early 'thirties. Public interest in the subject was also reflected in the formation of an Economics Society at Canterbury College.[70] The study of other "social questions" was taken up by the Christchurch Practical Psychology Club (CPPC), founded in 1928.[71] During 1926 one local newspaper with a large working-class readership looked to psycho-analysis and sociology to eventually overcome the problem of crime.[72] Three years later it was discussing "crime as a university subject" and was quoting with favour Miss B.E. Baughan B.A., of the CPPC on the need for more professional treatment for criminals.[73] But this attitude was radically revised during the public hysteria which accompanied the Gray brothers' spree of robbery and arson. Miss Baughan claimed that the youths should not be punished but referred to the Mental Defectives Board because they were "clearly abnormal" and their "social sense evidently infantile".[74] The Star dismissed such arguments, maintaining

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69. Times, 8 April, 1927. Of the 464 men enrolled, 226 were described as "manual workers". The remainder were classed as office workers (102), sales employees (60), professionals (45), or teachers (31). Of the 755 women enrolled, 391 were "at home" i.e. not in paid employment, 120 were teachers and 90 office workers. The progressive professionals of the WEA were clearly carrying their message to sections of the white-collar class, normally strong supporters of capital in their disdain of the labour movement. Admiration for one's "betters" in education and intellect could be a powerful counterweight to admiration for the "better born" or "better-off".

70. Star, 8 June, 1929.

71. Star, 12 October, 1928.

72. Star, 2 June, 1926.

73. Star, 12, 16 April, 1929.

74. Star, 21 February, 1930.

that "New Zealand is suffering from an orgy of leniency" and that it "could do with a few birchings".[75] In short, the newspaper returned to the values of individual responsibility and deterrence of and retribution for crime through vigorous punishment. These were values held almost universally in every other class except the professional.

Leading local professionals repeatedly demonstrated an awareness of their growing social and political role as well as their increasing economic importance. In a speech at Canterbury College early in 1926, Professor H.G. Denham, head of Chemistry, envisaged the professionally-trained as the arbiters between other classes:

> The scientific worker, isolated in his laboratory, was often in a far better position to solve an industrial trouble by reason of his unbiased judgment, and by his knowledge of kindred problems revealed in literature, than was the industralist, or even his own scientific staff.

There was a need to

> increase the supply of trained investigators, fitted with the proper outlook towards truth, trained in the scientific method, and, above all, imbued with the scientific spirit.[76]

Similarly, James Hight, Professor of History and Rector of the College, maintained that "the war stressed the social and political value of higher education".[77] One DSIR scientist, F.R. Callaghan, went so far as to suggest that the government should provide cheap loans to those educated at an agricultural college.[78] He claimed that a lack of education was now the main brake on production.

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75. Star, 24, 27 February, 1930. Later it opposed the Howard League's request for a psychiatric clinic in Christchurch: "we still have mental hospitals and gaols as an absolutely necessary feature of the social order". Star, 4 November, 1930.

76. Star, 19 March, 1926.

77. Star, 23 March, 1928.

78. Star, 18 July, 1927.

The expression of this professional class confidence through direct participation in politics was still limited, but it was growing. Labour's successful ticket in the city council elections of 1927 included the Rev. J.K. Archer, a university-trained Baptist minister; the Rev. Clyde Carr, who had attended three of the country's university colleges; and George Manning M.A., a trade union secretary who had gained his degree at Canterbury College. James McCombs, M.P. for Lyttelton and re-elected city councillor in 1929, had trained for the Anglican ministry. Although not herself professionally-trained, his wife Elizabeth espoused a Fabian ideology which emphasised education and efficient government. Their son Terence, a secondary schoolteacher and Doctor of Science, was to be the second university graduate elected to parliament for Labour when he succeeded his mother as M.P. for Lyttelton at a by-election in 1935.[79] A British medical practitioner, Dr Frank Birkinshaw, was virtually assured of the Labour candidacy for Hurunui during the General Election of 1935 but for some reason his nomination did not proceed.[80] Nationally, Labour had a significant new echelon on intellectuals as a result of its victory, including Dr D.G. McMillan, the Rev. A. Nordmeyer and Ormond Wilson. With the defeat of both T.K. Sidey and W.D. Stewart in Dunedin, the only M.P. in the National Party with any university training was Adam Hamilton. Labour was clearly becoming the party of the politically active intellectual as well as that of the working classes.

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79. Henry Greathead Rex Mason, M.A., LL.B., M.P. from 1926 for Eden and then Auckland Suburbs, was the first. Fred Schramm, M.P. for Auckland East from 1931, had studied at Canterbury College and worked as a solicitor. However, he did not possess a degree.

80. Times, 1 May, 1935.

Within Canterbury College and in public, the Economics lecturer George Lawn voiced support for Labour and socialism in a vague way.[81] He was appointed to the Reserve Bank Board following the change of government. University staff who took a firmer socialist line during the early 'thirties included Professor F. Sinclaire and Helen Simpson, both of the English Department.[82] Sinclaire had edited a journal called Socialist in Melbourne. Winston Rhodes, an outstanding scholar, arrived at the university college in 1933, also from Melbourne. He had a considerable influence on the opinions of some of the more thoughtful students.[83]

The selection and election of a number of Labour candidates with professional qualifications during 1935 was partly a manifestation of the way that the depression further enhanced the prestige of the professional class. It also showed how the determination had grown within that class to make government work better, more professionally, if necessary by entering it themselves.

There were many other indications of these trends. With capitalism apparently failing, public interest in possible alternatives and in economics generally was running high. This was indicated by the heavy demand at the Canterbury Public Library for books dealing with economics, or life within the Soviet Union.[84] Unemployment gave many more people both the

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81. See for example lecture blaming the depression on "the economic system" and maintaining that it would not cure itself. Press, 29 April, 1931. He was also associated with the Friends of the Soviet Union. Times, 26 September, 1932.

82. See interview with Denis Glover in Simpson, op.cit., p.124.

83. Information from Jim Gardner, a student at the time.

84. Sun, 17 August, 6 September, 1932.

time and the incentive to investigate such subjects. Debating and economics societies flourished alongside the Social Credit League and the Friends of the Soviet Union.[85] Long letters to the four Christchurch newspapers explored the by-ways of the various economic theories. Persons with professional qualifications in economics attracted considerable public attention. For example, the Canterbury Chamber of Commerce commissioned Professor A.H. Tocker of Canterbury College to write a monthly report on economic conditions within the dominion and international economic developments.

The remarkable, if short, career of the New Zealand Legion furnishes a further example of professional attempts to find rational solutions to depression problems. Pugh has rightly described the rise of the Legion as largely a conservative response to the devaluation of 1933.[86] In Christchurch the organisation grew out of public meetings held to condemn the government's action.[87] But there were many stands in the conservative protest. Certainly many capitalists, particularly importers, felt themselves to have been unfairly and cynically penalised for the benefit of another sector. However, a surprising amount of the outcry came from professionals, most of whom would not have had a great financial interest in the issue. Rather they seem to have felt that principles of economics, honesty and national unity were being sacrificed for political gain. At least one contemporary observer noted the heavy representation of professionals within the Legion:

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85. Sun, 29 August, 1933.

86. M. Pugh, The New Zealand Legion and Conservative Protest in the Great Depression, unpublished M.A. thesis, Auckland University, 1969.

87. Times, 2 February, 4 August, 1933.

> The New Zealand Legion was led by a man called Dr Campbell Begg and he gathered together men of a professional nature, or people who were self-employed (not trade unionists and not businessmen so much as semi-professional people) and they formed organisations through New Zealand to advocate the running of New Zealand in a businesslike way, making the show work and having integrity, as they used to say, in politics...they remained a movement of the middle-class semi-professional...[88]

Pugh has described the typical Legion member as a town lawyer in his early forties.[89] In Wellington Evan Parry, "a well-known solicitor", led the way;[90] in Christchurch K.G. Gresson, a lawyer from a prominent local landowning and professional family was a hard-working local centurion;[91] and in Oamaru Frank Milner, the headmaster of Waitaki Boys' High School, lent his considerable prestige to the movement.[92]

The professional dominance within the Legion was a major reason for its rapid demise. Most of the organisation's capitalist supporters appear to have envisaged it as a means of putting pressure on the government to reduce state and local authority spending and cut down on political interference in business. But professionals tended to take a more radical view of the Legion's function and instinctively began to think of ways that action by central government could ameliorate the depression through intervention. As one disgruntled rural capitalist remarked, Dr Campbell Begg was "fond of proposing new schemes".[93] It seems likely that it was his proposal to

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88. T. Simpson, The Sugarbag Years, Wellington, 1974, p.132.

89. Pugh, op.cit., p.91.

90. Simpson, op.cit., p.134.

91. Press, 10 May, 10, 23, 24 June, 4 July, 4, 15 August, 1933.

92. Pugh, op.cit., p.95. Milner was also a strong supporter of the League of Nations Union. Press, 28 November 1932.

93. Sun, 19 October, 1933. Campbell Begg himself claimed that the New Zealand Legion opposed "the shibboleths of insularism and progress-killing conservatism". Sun, 4 May, 1934.

form a new political party rather than a single boring speech in the Dunedin Town Hall which provoked the mass resignation of the Otago executive of the Legion.[94] Exposure to ninety minutes of bottom-numbing boredom was one of the hazards of contemporary public life, to be borne stoically by those seeking prominence. Furthermore, canny Dunedin businessmen were not likely to abandon the large investment of time, money and prestige involved in organising a public meeting on the strength of one such performance.

There was initially some criticism of a lack of policy from the Legion. When one emerged, just over six months after the organisation's initial rise, the doctor and his cohorts put many of their followers in grave danger of apoplexy. The proposals included the issue of a "stamp scrip" instead of money and the nationalisation of land to overcome mortgage problems and increase production by encouraging more productive farmers.[95] At a meeting of the Hororata branch of the Legion shortly afterwards, the local secretary, J.W.D. Hall, pointed out that "all present" had joined the crusade "partly to assist in the achievement of a more economical form of government and partly to help in the political education of the people", aims dear to most capitalists.[96] G.H. Grigg, another landowner, then moved that "Dr Begg should not be allowed to make such statements" as he had just made on policy. H.T. Reeves,

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94. In Simpson, op.cit., p.134, a member of the Dunedin executive of the Legion claims that this was what led to the resignation of the entire local executive. However, that did not happen until almost eighteen months after the Legion had been formed, and its radical course set. Press, 20 September, 1934.

95. Sun, 29 July, 1933.

96. Sun, 19 October, 1933.

apparently sensitive to constitutional niceties, attempted to add an amendment pointing out that the doctor was not being "gagged" as an individual. This was rejected out of hand, Mr Grigg declaring that Begg should be gagged. A horse-whipping was not officially proposed, but would probably have been passed by acclamation.

The Legion was certainly the most famous of the organisations led by professionals trying to find a way out of the depression and then to popularise it. But there were others. One example was a body known variously as the National Reconstruction Association or the National Recovery Association. It was founded by an Auckland solicitor, J.D. McMillan, in July, 1933, and claimed to be "non-political".[97] It certainly gained a wide range of support, with Dan Sullivan agreeing to become chairman of the Canterbury branch and the chairman of the Associated Banks also giving his support, initially at least. The Rev. J.K. Archer was also involved locally. The most active local member of the association appears to have been its deputy-chairman, J.E. Strachan M.A., B.Sc., the innovative headmaster of Rangiora High School.[98] The provincial secretary was H.A.C. North, a prominent local public accountant.[99] The movement described itself as "a voluntary association of New Zealand people who believe that there is a way out of the depression of our times if we had intelligence enough to find it, and the integrity of purpose to pursue it".[100] The immediate aim was to get "the best

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97. Press, 20 September, 1933.

98. Sun, 25 November, 1933.

99. Sullivan to Secretary, National Reconstruction Association, Christchurch City Council, Outward Correspondence, 13 December, 1933. James Hay, the retailer, was also an active member.

100. Press, 20 September, 1933.

people possible thinking and working towards a plan of national recovery". This was intended to lead to research, public consideration and finally a dominion conference. By the end of 1933 the association was advocating a nationally planned economy.[101] As with the New Zealand Legion, an attempt to meet the problems of the depression by professionals had led to proposals which were at loggerheads with capitalist doctrine.

Even before the exchange crisis and the launching of the New Zealand Legion, a "For New Zealand Society" enjoyed a brief vogue amongst those seeking radical, centrally-imposed solutions to the economic crisis in 1932. Speakers for the society included a Dunedin WEA tutor, Lloyd Ross, M.A., LL.B. He stated that "if you asked me for a simple way out of the slump I would say send for J.M. Keynes and make him dictator for three years."[102] L.C. Walker, a somewhat eccentric local bacon manufacturer, declared at the next meeting that

> there is only one way to get democratic government as we understand it and that is to elect an autocrat...That is the only way to do things expeditiously and to plan.[103]

He was particularly emphatic on the need for a central bank, to be run by "experts". A fellow Friend of the Soviet Union, N. Morgan Williams, the future Labour M.P. for Kaiapoi, spoke at the next meeting.[104]

Meanwhile the influence of centralising professionalism was becoming increasingly evident in government itself. In 1925

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101. Times, 24 November, 1933.

102. Times, 29 February, 1932. It was this sort of professional impatience with democracy and eagerness to reshape society "for its own good" that led the Webbs and Shaw to praise the dictatorships of both Stalin and Mussolini.

103. Times, 7 March, 1932.

104. Times, 14 March, 1932.

and 1928 elections the well-worn American slogan of "less government in business and more business in government" had been frequently used by both the major non-Labour parties. However, as the interwar economic doldrums got steadily worse, government appeared to feel a growing need to call in economic experts, if only to put a gloss on what they already wished to do for political or ideological reasons of their own. In 1930 the United Government requested Sir Otto Niemeyer to visit New Zealand to advise them on how to deal with the dominion's worsening economic situation.[105] Two years later the Coalition called on a committee of economists, including Professor Tocker, to tell it how the state could intervene to help business.[106] Few politicians now seemed to believe that the economy could simply be left to itself and the businessmen to come right. Part of the way in which Coates established his dominance over the government was his ability to use intellectuals to supply the arguments he needed. His "Brains Trust" was vigorously criticised by the Democrat Party and by some newspapers.[107] But given the extent of the cult of the expert throughout so much of New Zealand society by 1935, it is doubtful whether this group of the best educated men in the country was truly an electoral liability. Whatever effect they had on the election, and it was probably minimal, these men were destined to exert a growing political influence in Wellington while most of the Democrats carried their free market rhetoric off into the political wilderness.

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105. Times, 22, 23 September, 1930.

106. Sun, 12 February, 4 March, 1932.

107. See letter by individual styling himself "Democrat" well before the Democratic Party was formed. Sun, 8 October, 1934. Also editorials, Sun, 29 October, 27 November, 1934.

Substantial numbers of professionals and some capitalists were recruited from the white-collar class. This class consisted principally of clerical and sales employees, along with some auxiliaries such as primary school teachers. It was characterised by obedience to rules and orders, respect for authority and adherence in public to a relatively strict code of dress, speech and behaviour.[108] These features reflected the white-collar worker's economic situation as essentially the servant of those more wealthy and powerful than himself. He was frequently entrusted with his employer's money, and could acquire considerably knowledge of the workings of his business and his financial standing. A reputation for loyalty and honesty was therefore essential for such an employee. Employment in an office often entailed working in close proximity to the boss, who would understandably normally prefer clean, unobtrusive and agreeable individuals for such a post. As most employers who could afford office staff were capitalists, it was wise for their clerks to hold, or at least express, capitalist views. Furthermore, an employer was more likely to feel his own reputation affected if any scandal or even unorthodoxy was detected in his office staff than it if was seen to exist in his more distant wage-workers. Sales staff often enjoyed similar privileges and responsibilities, and were therefore required to be equally reputable. They were, moreover, frequently selling to people from the ruling classes who expected cleanliness, respectability and a degree of servility. These habits persisted in the profession during the interwar

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108. Much of the description of the white-collar class employed in this section derives from D. Lockwood's brilliant pioneering work The Blackcoated Worker, London, 1958. This work is provocatively subtitled "a study in class consciousness".

period, even though it was catering increasingly for a mass rather than a select market. Woolworth's was already operating in Christchurch, albeit on a fairly modest scale, but the supermarket was a thing of the future. Most department stores aspired to the tone now only to be found in an emporium like Ballantyne's.

The incomes of white-collar workers were not far below those of skilled workers in a good year and probably better during bad years because they were in the form of a fixed salary.[109] However, the white-collar workers was normally more dependent on his employer. His services increased in value as his experience of the firm, department or individual employing him grew, and he was rewarded with extra job security and perhaps a rise in pay. But in the event of his dismissal or redundancy his "added value" largely vanished and he was equipped mainly with the generalised and now very widespread skills of literacy and numeracy.[110] Whereas very many skilled workers could ply their trade on their own account for a reduced income during a depression, there was little scope for piecework or part-time employment in white-collar occupations. Furthermore, while most skilled working men could adjust fairly readily to labouring work if they had to take it, most white-collar workers faced severe physical, social and emotional problems in making such a transition. This

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109. The mean income for Clerks in the 1926 Census was £195, compared with £215 for a Cabinet-maker and £190 for a sawmill hand. Census, 1926, vol.XI, p.8-38. In 1936 the comparable figures were £136, £127 and £109. Calculated from Census, 1936, vol.XII, p.88-99.

110. "The market had very little to do with it. When he was put on the market he was an unskilled specialist". Lockwood, op.cit., p.83. Also G. Crossick, "The Emergence of the Lower Middle Class in Britain", in G. Crossick (ed.), The Lower Middle Class in Britain, London, 1977, p.23.

increased the latter's sense of dependence on their employers and identification with their interests. It also tended to lead to a preparedness to put up with poor pay and working conditions, even cuts in salary, rather than risk dismissal by complaints or threats. White-collar occupations therefore provided only barren ground for trade unions, which had the additional handicap of being associated with the rough-spoken and the unclean. They tended to form organisations like the Commercial Travellers' Association, which was closer to a social club and contained employers in its membership. White-collar workers were often active in church and supporting groups, again frequently in contact with the employing class.

The white-collar worker has been the individual most persistently accused of possessing a "false consciousness" of his economic position. Even leaving aside the lack of objectivity implicit in this concept - consciousness surely simply exists or does not[111] - the idea that white-collar workers were acting against their own economic interests is incorrect. Whereas other employees could threaten to take their skills elsewhere, even onto the open market, most white-collar workers could not. To keep their jobs and to gain promotion they had to be conformable to the employer's wishes. In return they got more money, more authority and, within their own class at least, more prestige. In a few cases they might even acquire sufficient expertise and public confidence to float a business of their own, as did James Hay. Above all, they represented the authority of outside interests - private capital, the state or the local authority - in their dealings

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111. See Lockwood, op.cit., p.212-13, for a powerful presentation of this argument.

with working people. Then, as now, they tended to maintain or enhance their positions by increasing the size or efficiency of production. Such a process almost invariably entailed a relative or absolute decline in the income, comfort, job satisfaction or independence of production workers. At the same time the latter tended to regard office and sales staff as largely parasitic because they produced little that was of tangible value and did not exert themselves physically.[112]

The white-collar class had a number of features in common with the professional class. Both relied on education, albeit at very different levels, and dealt in abstract concepts through numbers and words. Some white-collar workers may be said to have attained professional status in the upper reaches of administration, although by the 'twenties they had normally acquired some academic or professional qualifications along the way. The essential difference between the two classes can be illustrated by the experience of Dr Baker-McLagan, the School Medical Officer in Christchurch between the wars. In visiting primary schools she was repeatedly amused by the way that teachers and school inspectors reacted to her spelling mistakes, use of slang and "bad grammar".[113] As successful white-collar workers striving to turn their pupils into good white-collar workers, they were alternatively shocked or smugly delighted that an individual whom they considered to be superior to themselves should make such mistakes. They

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112. Crossick, op.cit., p.37, writes of "skilled workers whose pride in their own craft produced some degree of contempt for the puny and parasitic clerks".

113. E. Baker-McLagan, Stethoscope and Saddlebags, Auckland, 1965, p.126, 140.

imagined that "the best people" spoke "perfect English" and sought to emulate them. Coming from a professional background (her father had run a private school in Akaroa for the children of gentlefolk) and having experienced a professional education, Dr Baker-McLagan saw speech as a means of conveying ideas and feelings. She had no need to keep it within rigid rules in order to emphasise her class status or to get a clerical job: "They themselves were all products of conventional state school educations, something I never had; I was a bird of a different feather from those they knew".[114]

The origins of the white-collar class probably derive from personal service - the personal secretaries of kings, noblemen, high churchmen and merchants. By multiplying the number of powerful men and the scale of commercial operations, the first wave of the Industrial Revolution greatly magnified the size of the class. The second wave continued this growth, particularly as the size of firms tended to increase and international enterprises flourished. The steady growth of central and local government bureaucracies added to the opportunities as did the expansion in sales opportunities and advertising that came with higher general standards of living. Consequently skilled working class parents were increasingly anxious to see their sons, and occasionally their daughters, do well at school. They often strove to support them through the extra years of high school. Between 1914 and 1926 the percentage of Standard VI boys going on to high school in Christchurch increased from 45% to 69%.[115] With the growing insecurity and decreasing opportunities of apprenticeships,[116]

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114. Ibid., p.126.

115. Star, 22 April, 1926.

116. Sun, 4 August, 1926.

educational qualifications were more and more regarded as the passport to the secure, above-average income which brought respectability and a home of one's own. Newspaper editors might deplore an education system which threatened to "create an abnormal number of penmen, in opposition to workmen".[117] They might criticise the rush to "clean-collar" occupations and blame it for high unemployment.[118] But mum was soon proven right and the pundits wrong as office and shop work absorbed a massive influx of employees, most of them youthful, despite the depression. Matriculation, a fews years at high school, ten bob a week as an office-boy and studies at night-school were to set the sons of cabinet-makers and coachmakers on the road to powerful management positions after 1945.

The depression tended to enhance the attraction of white-collar occupations. In general the pay in such positions did not fall as far as in other jobs and there was much less unemployment.[119] Those who were employed by central or local government were particularly secure, as were most of those who worked for international firms in the new industries, which were generally less hard-hit. Just as capitalism no longer seemed to provide security, so the independence of a trade or a small business appeared hazardous. A safe job with the government or a large firm was now more than ever the aim of bright young people from the working classes.

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117. Star, 3 April, 1926.

118. Star, 17 November, 1926.

119. Unemployment amongst "clerks, not otherwise indicated" was 7.2% in 1936. It was 0.6% amongst public service clerks and 0.7% amongst bank clerks. Cabinet-makers had a 9.1% unemployment rate and spent an average of 12.8 weeks off work, compared with 9.6 weeks for the "clerks, n.o.i.", Census, 1936, vol.XI, p.10, 14, 24, 27.

The white-collar class was not politically inactive. Sections of it appear to have given strong support to the Temperance Movement and to other organisations concerned with public morals. White-collar workers were often anxious to make their communities cleaner and "nicer". However, it was wiser for them to avoid public activity which might offend their employers and there were strictures against political involvement by public servants. The typical politically active white-collar worker tended to support non-Labour parties. This was not just out of fear or admiration for the employing class, it also reasserted his class identity - "above" manual work and trade unions. Nor should the political value of the white-collar vote be underestimated. Democracy had potentially provided working-class activists with a parliamentary majority. The white-collar class gave anti-Labour forces their own mass vote, frequently located in the marginal electorates between labouring and capitalist districts. This vote was by nature diligent and loyal, remembering to enrol and to vote, generally unfazed by official forms or instructions. It was not generally as mobile as the unskilled working class and was likely to appear automatically on local body rolls by reason of home ownership. White-collar workers often owned the motor cars necessary to get out the vote. The big influx into this class between the wars brought in some children of working-class parents who remained loyal to Labour. Under that party's rule, legislative compulsion brought the real beginnings of white-collar trade unionism. But overall the growth in the white-collar class swelled the ranks of anti-Labour, bringing in large numbers of modern young men and women, well-dressed and confident. They detested the "commonness", the compulsion and

the old-fashioned stuffiness which they associated with the Labour Party. They joined their older counterparts in attacking "heavy taxation" imposed to help people who lacked their own capacity or inclination to save or invest in superannuation. Such young white-collar workers were to be the backbone of Sid Holland's organisation in urban areas[120] and the foundation for the National Party's dominance of politics in the post-war years.

The independent working class, which supplied so many of the young recruits to the white-collar class, combined skilled tradesmen, small businessmen and small farmers. Its basic ideals revolved around concepts of freedom and of work, and, as with other classes they reflected its economic position and interests.

The freedom that the independent working class sought and treasured was primarily economic. In the case of a shopkeeper, self-employed tradesman, market gardener or dairyman the nature of this freedom was clear. After mortgage and debt payments, if any, the product of their labour was their own and they owned the means of production. They were not subject to the discipline of a capitalist or white-collar boss. Skilled working men, the largest section of the independent working class in Christchurch, were less obviously independent. However, their skills were a jealously guarded means of asserting a considerable degree of freedom from employer authority. A skilled man normally supplied his own tools - and

120. See report on meeting at F.W. Freeman's house during which Sidney Holland spoke on "Labour's Appeal to Youth". Press, 1 September, 1931. Also the targets of the Citizens' Association enrolment drive in 1935. Star, 11 April, 1935.

had traditionally carried them away in his bag or "sack" when dismissed. Historically at least, the long period of on-the-job training - five or seven years - had been necessary to provide workmen able to take raw material such as wood, leather and iron through to finished products. In addition, the skilled man almost invariably belonged to a trade union, a token of his skilled status. Trade solidarity could be mobilised if an employer dared to put unskilled men onto work traditionally belonging to tradesmen. Action might also be taken where an employer cut pay rates, forced the pace of work or ordered jobs to be botched rather than completed to the traditional standard. Speaking in 1930 a Christchurch coachbuilder noted the degree of independence that his trade had enjoyed at the turn of the century; "we did not have to work against time as we do now and the builders were able to spend almost as long as they liked on their work".[121] In practice there was a kind of balance of authority, with some tacit concession to the boss's wishes, particularly during hard times. A skilled man might be appointed foreman, but he had to be a good tradesman himself to command the respect of his fellow workers.

The much sought-after independence could also be achieved by going into business on one's own, although the need for large amounts of capital made it almost impossible in some trades such as boilermaking. A successful move into self-employment, where a man could "be his own master" was regarded as desirable and creditworthy.

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121. Star, 7 March, 1930.

Dan Sullivan's background and attitudes clearly illustrate this. His father had worked as a labourer but had managed to achieve independence by becoming a labour contractor. He launched Dan into a skilled career as a cabinet-maker.[122] When the latter went overseas in search of work and personal experience, he was accompanied by a friend and fellow tradesman named Webster, whose family had their own furniture-making business. On his return, Sullivan married Webster's sister. Three decades later he was attempting to find his own son a skilled or white-collar job but was obliged to set him up as a greengrocer instead.[123] It was the uncertain economic prospects of the latter course, rather than any class repugnance, that made it less desirable than permanent employment. When Dan Sullivan reminisced about his early trade union days, he had particularly warm praise for Andrew Rea, a President of the Trades and Labour Council who had gone into his own business. Sullivan treated this mentor's success in business in the same favourable way he regarded the achievements of another colleague, W. Newton, who had risen to a high post in the Labour Department.

Other examples of the linkage between skill and business ownership include that of C. Renn.[124] In 1926 he was executive secretary of the Canterbury Federation of Unions and an official of a range of unions from the Journalists' to the Traction and Stationary Engine-drivers. A compositor by trade, he had arrived in New Zealand in 1910 and three years later he was

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122. The following details of Sullivan's life come mainly from two newspaper columns he wrote under the heading "Labour News and Views" in Times, 9, 16 January, 1930.

123. Christchurch City Council, Outward Correspondence, 26, 31 October, 1933.

124. Star, 12 March, 1926.

president of the Canterbury Trades and Labour Council and vice-president of the United Federation of Labour. In March, 1926, however, he returned to London to take over the management of his family's firm, manufacturing pianos. Fred Cooke, a Christchurch leader of the Socialist Party and Labour city councillor, had come to New Zealand in 1900 "to take up land".[125] He took a job as a tailor instead, but at one time owned a small farm in Marshlands. Of his four sons, one became a builder in the Waikato, two became fruit-farmers, and one started a business in New Brighton.[126] Cooke was twice a parliamentary candidate for the New Zealand Labour Party and served on its executive. He had been imprisoned for sedition during the Great War.

A move into business on one's own account could lead eventually to a shift into the capitalist class, as in the cases of Christchurch industrialists such as John Anderson, Henry Holland, John Aulsebrook, George Scott and Thomas Edmonds. However, such success was not the aim of most - it would be wrong to see people such as the Websters or Reas as embittered failed entrepreneurs, Andersons or Edmonds who could not "make the grade". They fitted instead into the description of the "small shop-keeper or local master" provided, with more than a hint of a sneer, by E.J. Hobsbawm:

> His ideal was the secure dream of all "little men"...a small-scale society of modest property-owners and comfortably-off wage-earners, without great distinctions of wealth or power; though doubtless, in its quiet way, getting wealthier and more comfortable all the time.[127]

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125. Press, 27 June, 1930.

126. Press, 30 June, 1930.

127. Hobsbawm, op.cit., p.13.

By establishing a secure little business to work in, the independent working class man had fulfilled his class ideal.

The independent working class ideal of freedom was, however, a limited concept. Parental, particularly paternal, authority tended to be strong within families and there was usually little toleration of cultural, sartorial, dietary or sexual deviation. Racism was endemic, particularly where other races were thought to threaten opportunities for independence by "locking up" land or competing for markets. Many local workers had gone to the North Island to take advantage of Maori land "opened up for settlement". Harry Ell, a local Radical and champion of skilled working class liberty, could still proudly recall his service with the Armed Constabulary at Parihaka.[128]

However, as the local Maori population was small and had long since been largely dispossessed of its land, it was complaints of unfair competition that were most frequently heard. These were directed principally against Asiatics, and in particular the Chinese. Although small, the Chinese community within the Christchurch Urban Area in 1926 was larger than that of the Maori.[129] Its work was concentrated in market gardening, and the Auckland-based White New Zealand League received some local support from Europeans in that sector. In May, 1926, a motion from the local Fruitgrowers' Federation referred the question of Chinese immigration to the Trades and Labour Council. It saw the council as

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128. Times, 28 June, 1934. Ell had been president of the Christchurch Tailoresses' and Pressers' Union.

129. Both were very small. There were 143 Maoris included in the Census, as against 158 Chinese (part of a total of 278 "race aliens"). Census, 1926, vol.I, p.12; vol.VI, p.2.

> an amalgamation of all the white workers of New Zealand...supposed to look after the interests of the white workers of the country. We as a branch of the workers can send a recommendation to the Trades and Labour Council to take the matter up for us...[130]

Isolated Chinese were often subject to attack from working-class youths.[131] The Christchurch evening newspapers, those directed primarily at a working-class readership, could be counted on to support further extensions of the already draconian immigration laws against Chinese. One editorial declared that "Asiatic penetration in any degree is objectionable" and claiming that previous immigrants had erected "hovels...so crude and insanitary that no white man could ever descend to the level of living in them".[132] The same newspaper printed a flood of letters, most of them clearly from working people, expressing hostility and disgust towards the Chinese.[133] The racism was far less evident in the morning newspapers, which catered more for capitalists, professionals and white-collar workers.

Skilled workers were equally fearful of manufactured imports from Asian countries where "cheap labour" lived "on the smell of an oily rag". They saw tariff protection as an essential means of keeping the White Race - specifically themselves and their families - above the standard of living of

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130. Star, 3 May, 1926. The semi-skilled members of the Tramway Union took a similar line:
> That we the Christchurch Tramway Employees Union urge upon the Government the immediate necessity of preventing Asiatics from settling in this country as we are of the opinion that their mode of life and standard of living is [sic] an absolute menace to the white population and further that we request all trade unions endorse our action in this matter. TEU, Minutes, 14 December, 1926.

131. Star, 4 April, 1927.

132. Star, 18 November, 1926. On the other hand, it did warn against immigration from "the lower-grade nations of Europe". Star, 27 October, 1926.

133. See letters from "Whitebait", "White Parent", "A White New Zealander", Star, 1 May, 1926.

"coolies" and "kaffirs". They suspected that capitalists would have no hesitation in so degrading them in order to make more profit. The parallel with the situation of the white working class in South Africa was often made explicit by E.H. Howard, the Labour M.P. for Christchurch South.[134] He had visited South Africa in 1924 as New Zealand delegate to the Empire Parliamentary Association, and he clearly regarded the white South African Labour Party as having similar motives as his own; the securing of white working-class aspirations first.

As with the capitalist class, work was central to the independent working class ideal, not least because it enabled a man to gain his independence. However, this was not a vague notion of past work which had been fossilised in order to provide a retrospective justification for present riches. It meant actual physical labour, heavy or intricate, with a tangible product. An able man was expected to work to earn his living and virtually to justify his existence. Work was seen as the primary source of legitimate economic or social success, not birth, academic qualifications or capital. Those who enjoyed an income higher than the hardest or most skilled worker simply because they had capital, and those who subsisted off charity in good times were alike regarded as parasitic. Both the rich and the poor tended to be prejudged as idle. For example, when a church organisation proposed putting a properly managed night shelter for casual labourers in Waltham there was a strong outcry from within that overwhelmingly Labour suburb. The leader of a deputation from the area to the city council pointed out that "Waltham has always been a working

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134. Star, 22 June, 1929.

man's district".[135] Itinerant labourers were apparently not to be classed as "working men". Labour councillors sympathised and the proposed resthouse was shifted to the central city area. Similarly, part of the resistance to attendance at the Charitable Aid Committee was the deeply ingrained feeling that it was where "no hopers" went to get their "handouts". Such disparagement of those in other working classes helped to give an added moral force to their own skill and independence, and helped to justify a much higher rate of pay for work that was normally much less physically demanding than labouring.

Other aspects of the independent working class value-system also complemented and enhanced their drive for independence. Both permanent employment and the learning of a trade required a certain degree of application and reliability. Drunkenness, carelessness, dishonesty and immorality which might lead to an early marriage all threatened the ability of the young man to serve out his apprenticeship, learn his trade and find a secure niche. Failure could mean falling into the uncertain and often poverty-stricken world of the casual labourer. Consequently there was some emphasis on respectability and careful behaviour, although not nearly to the same extent as in the white-collar class.

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135. Archdeacon Haggitt argued that the men to be accommodated were "a decent type...not wastrels". They were now having to sleep in parks. However, the deputation replied that "Waltham was a working men's district and did not wish to have its property depreciated by the erection of such a place". Press, 28 April, 1931. Few areas of the city were more staunchly pro-Labour. In the Municipal Election a few days later the Waltham Library recorded a 77% vote for that party. Press, 7 May, 1931.

Home ownership was also given a high value.[136] It meant freedom from the burden of rent and from fear of eviction. It also enabled the independent working man to supply his family with vegetables and frequently eggs and poultry as well. An individual who failed to cultivate his garden was likely to be regarded as lazy and spendthrift. Owning one's own home also conferred some greater privacy and, above all, a sense of independence. It had the side-effect of providing legal rights and a status which was respected by their social "betters" in the capitalist class, whose own power rested so heavily on the principle of private property.

Furthermore, the prudent working man was expected to put by as much as he could for his retirement. The Old Age Pension was little better than a pittance when compared to the average wage, which a middle-aged skilled working man would almost certainly be receiving. As interest rates were low, a fairly substantial amount had to be saved before retirement. This might be placed in a bank (especially the Post Office Savings Bank), a friendly society, a building society or money club. In some cases it was lent out on mortgage or invested in rented houses.

The Industrial Revolution had greatly augmented the number and size of skilled occupations and hence the extent of the

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136. Sullivan was particularly enthusiastic about the System of Advances to Workers through the State Advances Department and he praised Ward for it in fulsome terms:

> It is doubtful whether any Single Act of Parliament placed on the Statute Book of the country has brought more happiness to the people of New Zealand.

But the minute scale of defaulting showed that they had deserved it:

> What a truly amazing record! What wonderful tribute to the honesty, the stability of character of the workers of this country!...One wonders whether anywhere else in the world there is to be found a class or community to whom it is possible to advance large sums of money almost without security and almost without fear of loss. Times, 12 September, 1929.

independent working class. The construction industry, the traditional home of many trades, had experienced an enormous growth in the demand for its services as factories and cities proliferated. New trades such as boilermaking, moulding and engineering appeared to provide and to service the new machinery. Old trades like printing, coachbuilding and blacksmithing found their industries changing as well as expanding. Trades concerned with consumption, such as tailoring, cobbling and watchmaking began catering for a much larger, less elite market.

As Christchurch grew, and particularly as it industrialised during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, these trades became firmly established here. Railway stock required maintenance and replacement; agriculture demanded traction engines, farm implements and harness; the new freezing-works wanted boilers; and a growing and increasingly prosperous population purchased its biscuits and its boots. In many ways the city became a haven of independent working class New Zealanders who were rather cut off from a countryside dominated by capitalists and labourers. Even after two generations there was much about this class and its city which harked back to the "Old Country", albeit a very different old country than that idealised and frequently experienced by the capitalist and professional classes. With its numerous brass bands, many non-conformist churches, active Salvation Army, strong prohibition movement, money clubs, cycling, cricket and soccer, this section of Christchurch would not have been out of place in an industrial town back "Home". Inflows of skilled immigrants reinforced this while helping to meet the constantly growing demand for tradesmen. At the same time many skilled New Zealanders

"went Home" to learn more of their trade. The furniture trades in particular seem to have drawn men overseas. Dan Sullivan followed this path as a young french polisher. Another who made this journey at about the same time was a cabinetmaker named Frank Hill.[137] Having served his apprenticeship here, he went to England at the age of twenty to gain further training. Returning some years later he became one of the leading cabinetmakers in Christchurch and was specially commissioned to furnish the local royal suite in 1953.

The early concentration of independent working people in Christchurch helped to make it a stronghold of political labour. The city had elected Pember Reeves and 'labour' during the eighteen-nineties; Taylor and Progressive Liberalism in the early nineteen-hundreds. In the General Election of 1911, Labour and Socialist candidates captured forty per cent of the votes cast in the Christchurch Urban Areas. The independent working class vote also formed the basis for continuous Labour representation on the city council from that year. The stamp of this class can be seen in the moderation of the most successful Labour politicans in Christchurch. Here it was a generally prosperous class, anxious to assert and protect its interests, even to impose its values on the country, but not a downtrodden group, struggling by any means to escape an intolerable situation. Consequently Christchurch was the home of the United Labour Party and the Social Democratic Federation. After the formation of the New Zealand Labour Party its M.P.'s, particularly McCombs and Sullivan, placed themselves on the "moderate" wing of the parliamentary

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137. "Frank Hill" in Woodworker: Journal of the British Guild of Woodworkers, June, 1983.

party. The election of four Labour M.P.'s from 1922 and a Labour city council in 1927 enabled Christchurch to keep the title of New Zealand's "labour city" throughout the 'twenties.

However, the continued success of the labour movement as a whole concealed the fact that technological change was largely undermining the dominance of the independent working class within it. Many proud trades such as wheelwrighting, saddlery and harnessmaking virtually disappeared during the decade following the Great War. In 1930 an old maker of saddles and horse-collars claimed "it is a question of which will die first, the men or the trade".[138] Other skilled work such as blacksmithing and boilermaking, experienced a severe decline as oil and electricity took over from horsepower and stream. More generally, the use of electrical machinery tended to de-skill many jobs, particularly in woodworking and the metal trades. New tradesmen such as panelbeaters, motor mechanics and electricians appeared, but the development of mass production and the interchangeability of parts had severely reduced the real amount of skill involved in such jobs. Even though products were often more complex, there was less call for the trademan to build from raw materials. The fitter with his file was being increasingly displaced by the mechanic with his spanner.

The decline in the importance of skill and the power of the class largely dependent on it can be seen in the increasing movement of women into the trades.[139] It was also revealed in the growing tendency for employers to take on "learners"

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138. Star, 8 March, 1930.

139. See Ch. 4.

rather than apprentices.[140] In 1934 the Sun attacked the whole apprenticeship system as an "archaic survival" and criticised the Apprenticeship Act of 1922 which had attempted to move against the tide; "it has had the effect of imposing such serious obligations on employers that whenever possible they will avoid entering into apprenticeship contracts".[141] The newspaper specifically mentioned the motor trade as one area where the traditional period of apprenticeship was far too long. Similarly, the fact that employers could impose time restrictions on skilled workers such as coachbuilders indicated that the latter's power had declined.

A further example of the decreasing value being placed on skill can be seen in the reorganisation of the Addington Railway Workshops between 1925 and 1929. This was accompanied by the installation of large amounts of electrical and motor machinery. Previously the complex had been divided into departments on the basis of skilled trades - fitters, blacksmiths, moulders, carpenters, painters and boilermakers. Now there were to be only two departments, locomotive, and car and wagon shops, with the individual tradesmen placed where they were needed in the production line.[142] This was a "rational" division of labour, a concept which appealed to the white-collar, professional or capitalist manager who was interested primarily in production and efficiency. In the process, the traditional skilled workshop where an elite of tradesmen worked together as equals and jointly exercised their authority over

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140. Sun, 21 April, 1933.

141. Sun, 12 September, 1934.

142. AJHR, 1926, D 2, p.vi. In 1933 there were protests at Addington against the new machine methods which had "Americanised" the job. Sun, 26 September, 1933.

labourers and apprentices was largely destroyed. The change not only reduced their power and prestige, it revealed how much technology had already undermined their influence.

The depression heightened the anxiety of many independent working class people, both for their own futures and those of their children. The decline in the number of apprenticeships, initially supported by some unions to protect the jobs of members, was particularly worrying.[143] Writing to the Railways Department on behalf of a nephew of his who had been dismissed from his apprenticeship after two years, Mayor Sullivan maintained that "the dismissal of the boy leaves him without a skilled occupation and threatens to force him into the general labouring class".[144] This could "destroy his prospects for his entire life". In the year to March, 1926, many very skilled occupations such as cabinet-making, engineering and baking already enjoyed incomes which were below those in many unskilled and semi-skilled occupations.[145] This was usually particularly so when the skilled man was working on his own account. Even some independent working-class people who had achieved the status of employer (in terms of the census) earned less than semi-skilled workers in steady jobs. For example, greengrocers, orchardists, restaurant-keepers, market-gardeners and agricultural farmers with that status all have average incomes below those of locomotive engine-drivers,

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143. Labour Department Files, 17/25/466. There were 9586 male apprentices in New Zealand in 1926 but only 7064 in 1936 despite a 15% increase in the male workforce. Census, 1926, vol.IX, p.9; 1936, vol.X, p.iv.

144. Sullivan stated that he was not threatening but that he regarded "it as my duty to concentrate public attention on such cases". Sullivan to Wellington Manager, Railways Department, Christchurch City Council, Outward Correspondence, 16 January, 1933.

145. Census, 1926, vol.XI, p.8-27.

motormen or conductors.

By 1935 there had been a still greater narrowing of the advantage in income that the independent working class had enjoyed.[146] The average income of bakers had dropped by 38%, that of cabinet-makers by 40%, tinsmiths' 44%, painters' 46% and tailors' 47%. In comparison, the incomes of storemen had declined by only 28% and those of a wide range of other semi-skilled jobs by less than twenty per cent. Furthermore, most of the skilled occupations either showed significant decreases in total numbers or increases far below the increase in the male workforce. White-collar occupations, on the other hand, tended to show either much smaller drops in income - for example commercial travellers lost only 18% on average - or they experienced vast influxes of workers - as with the 89% increase in the number of shop-assistants. Many skilled men, such as cabinet-makers, tailors and plumbers, now brought less money home than mere clerks. Previously they had exceeded the latter's average income, in some cases by substantial amounts, and had tended to look down on "pen-pushers".

Given that some degree of economic recovery was under way by 1935, it seems likely that the shift in income and numbers away from the independent working class was evidence of technological change rather than just the depression itself. This class survived the shift in the more expensive workshops, in a number of new "skilled" jobs such as electrical work and motor mechanics, and whereever self-employed tradesmen and shopkeepers continued to operate. However, it also had a significant legacy in the attitudes it bequeathed, and sometimes took with it, to other classes.

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146. Unless otherwise indicated, the following figures are calculated from Census, 1926, vol.XI, p.8-27; 1936, vol.XII, p.88-99.

While many of the children of the independent working class went on to find security and good incomes in the white-collar class, others found them in sections of the labouring class. For technological change was improving the opportunities for members of this class to achieve a standard of living roughly comparable to those of many skilled and white-collar workers.

Traditionally the labouring class had been the mainstay of commercial agricultural production with "landless labourers" providing the necessary seasonal workforce. It had also done the fetching and carrying for skilled workers, but lacked the security and higher rates of pay that derived from skill and the ownership of the means of production. The Industrial Revolution had supplied this class with a much wider range of job opportunities and probably on balance a higher standard of living. The "navvy" was as indispensable as the great engineers to the construction of the new networks of railways and canals, and the whole revolution would have been stillborn without the movement of vast numbers of labourers into the coal-mines. Expanding world trade necessitated more seamen, stokers and watersiders, while the industrialisation of warfare and the expansion of strategic interests required large forces of soldiers and sailors. Factories needed stokers, draymen and storemen. They also had to employ many semi-skilled operatives - "labourers who worked machines" - as the skilled regarded them.[147]

The European development of New Zealand during the nineteenth century provided great scope for the immigrant labourers.

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147. E. Hobsbawm, Labouring Men, London, 1964, p.283.

Droving, shepherding and shearing competed with bush-felling, timber-milling, and railway construction. Urban building, coal-mining and industrial openings for labourers similar to those overseas had developed by the turn of the century. Export processing industries including freezing works, wool-scours and dairy factories added an important additional dimension. The rapid pace of development tended to lead to a shortage of labour and consequently relatively high wages. Some labourers were thereby able to save enough to acquire land or a business and thus gain their independence. A few rose further, into the capitalist class.

However, it would be easy to overestimate the labourer's chances of emerging from his class. The aspiring labourer was beset by many dangers and temptations. Although wage rates were higher than in the chronically oversupplied British labour market, they were still low and employment intermittent and seasonal in comparison with those enjoyed by urban skilled labour. It took a particularly strong-willed individual to save for long enough to buy his independence and then to persevere with the habits necessary to maintain it. Harsh and often dangerous working conditions, little female company, insanitary living quarters and extremely hard physical work encouraged excessive drinking, gambling, fighting and a tendency to uncontrolled celebration when finally released from the discipline of work and camp. The very survival of the casual worker was often seriously in doubt, let alone his will to better himself. When work was not available in the country, board and lodgings had to be paid for in town while work was sought on building sites, warehouses and on the wharves. Unfortuntately employment in those areas tended to have a seasonal pattern,

as well. Furthermore, travelling out to work in the season usually entailed either expenditure on fares and accommodation, or several days journeying with no income. A dependable and efficient worker might well be assured of a job at farms or mills he had visited in previous years,[148] although even then the weather, the state of the crop and the market could deprive him of his normal employment. Then he would have to join the numerous others who were spending their time searching for work rather than earning money. During periods of economic depression, when work was particularly hard to find in town but crops still had to be harvested in the countryside, larger numbers of labourers left the city and many more travelled on foot because they could not afford the cost of transport. Hence the popular measurement of the severity of a depression by counting the number of "swagmen" on the road or calling at the farm.

In addition, much of the labouring class was bound into a vicious circle of deprivation. The children of larger-than-average families with lower-than-average incomes tended to lack an adequate diet or living conditions. They were therefore often exposed to the debilitating effects of mal-nutrition and respiratory, parasitic and infectious diseases. Drunken or violent parents were also liable to damage a child mentally or physically, before or after birth. Despite the effectiveness of the Temperance Movement in restricting the sale of alcohol, it was still not unknown for a mother to send a young child to buy gin. The frequent absences of a labouring father (actual or de facto) in search of work placed an added

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148. Information from Mrs R. Righton of Burwood, whose husband worked as a labourer during the 'thirties.

burden on the mother, compounded by the constant fear that he would not return, or at least would not send money. Absence of a father, combined with an ethos which emphasised male physical strength often meant that only a mother with exceptional psychological power and concern could keep her sons out of trouble. Their resort to criminality might bring in extra income or at least reduce the burden on family finances. Lack of money, reading materials, privacy, adequate lighting, any family emphasis on formal education, and respectable background, speech and dress, deprived the vast majority of the children of the labouring class of any chance of entry into the white-collar class. Their best opportunity lay in acceptance into the skilled trades through an apprenticeship. But even in that case a personal knowledge or recommendation was frequently necessary, and that favoured the sons and daughters of the more respectable working classes. Often an apprenticeship or even "an opportunity to learn" had to be purchased, and the prospective tradesman had to be supported during his long period of training at miniscule rates of pay. Moreover, a high level of concentration and responsibility was required of the skilled worker and the background of most children of the labouring class would not be conducive to this. Education at school or through an apprenticeship required a determination to postpone present pleasures and immediate chances to earn money in favour of long-term security and earning power. With opportunities limited to a few and both families and neighbours relatively close-packed, pressure from siblings and peer-groups for the exceptional youngster to conform to labouring rather than other class values was doubtless strong.

The physical nature of the labourer's work was reflected in an emphasis on physical strength and a tendency to violence. There was generally little emphasis on the social respectability sought by other classes. Employers tended to hire men on the basis of their physical fitness or known capacity for work rather than their personal values or reputation - unless, of course, they were suspected of troublemaking by defying authority. Workers were often hired in batches and there was a tendency to regard them automatically as amoral and dishonest. But this mattered little so long as overseers were chosen carefully. Labourers were not entrusted with their employers' cash. Gambling, on cards, horses or coins ("two-up") was a very widespread practice, probably because of the lack of alternative forms of affordable entertainment. Most forms of gambling could be set up quickly and played under cover during breaks in work due to wet weather - often the only substantial breaks in a labourer's day. Both gambling and drinking helped to relieve the boredom, and also served as important types of formalised social and personal interaction.

There was also a great disproportion in the number of labourers appearing in court compared with individuals from other classes. Labouring was the given occupation of much of the stratum designated the "lumpenproletariat" by Marx. Whereas many terms are said to suffer in translation, this one has tended to suffer through lack of translation. In English the work appears to connote a lack of intelligence, even idiocy, in an undifferentiated mass, as in the term "lump" or "lumpish". But the German work "lumpen" denotes rascality, with the implication of an excess of cunning rather than stupidity. The Victorian term "the criminal classes" seems to

capture the meaning of the term better, and Marx was, after all, a Victorian.

It is unlikely that many criminals were totally dependent financially on illegal activities for long periods, except perhaps in the cases of bookmaking and sly-grogging. Rather there appears to have been a more relaxed attitude towards crime, particularly robbery, within the labouring class as a whole. Given frequent bouts of unemployment and reduced income, a preparedness to lie and to steal could be necessary to avoid homelessness and hunger. This could be rationalised by an ideology which regarded the existing distribution of resources as unjust. With their economic interest focussed on securing a basic living and some very simple distractions, the awareness of people with far more than this doubtless reinforced the feeling of injustice. The dismissive attitude towards them from classes which talked a lot about work but did comparatively little physical labour themselves also bred hostility. Then again, much of the labouring class came from backgrounds where the legal system and the rich were considered part of a system of oppression and unfair dispossession. A large section of the unskilled were from an Irish Catholic background and nursed an obvious grievance. They had little reason to change their attitude in a land where the ruling classes were heavily Anglican or Presbyterian, often Anglo-Irish or Scotch-Irish, and the law was English. Other groups with a history of dispossession included many Highland Scottish and English country labourers. The encroachment of landowners on common rights was a live issue in rural England throughout the nineteenth century.[149] Emigration to a country

149. R. Samuel, "'Quarry Roughs': Life and Labour in Headington Quarry. 1860-1920", in R. Samuel (ed.), Village Life and Labour, London, 1975, p.207-27.

where such rights had been pre-empted entirely by other classes, particularly the most wealthy, was not in itself likely to make labourers regard the legal system as fairer. A sense of alienation from the law would have been heightened by the increasing tendency of those that "had" to make rules regarding the personal behaviour of those that "had not". Licensing and gaming laws, arrests for drunkenness, compulsory education, child protection, and sanitary legislation were examples of such rules. As a School Medical Officer, Dr Baker-McLagan was at the forefront of one of these impositions. She recalled that in the early days of her work the reaction of many mothers was "if that doctor-woman wants my child's eyes (or adenoids or whatever it was) fixed up, she can jolly well pay for it".[150] The police continued to be equipped with, and to use, vagrancy laws against itinerant labourers who remained in town during the summer. The normal "defence" to such a charge, as in cases of drunkenness, fighting or petty dishonesty, was for the labourers or domestic to state that they were prepared to "go into the country" to get work.[151]

While the initial urban and industrial development of New Zealand increased the size of the independent working class, it also gave large sections of the labouring class greater income and security. It did this by providing many more steady,

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150. Baker-McLagan, op.cit., p.133.

151. Star, 1 April, 1926. Long distances were often travelled in search of work. One shearer claimed to have walked a hundred miles for a job in 1929. Star, 7 June, 1929. There was even something of a trans-Tasman labour market. In 1930 an Australian shearer claimed compensation for the loss of a finger, which had prevented him from "jumping a ship" home. He claimed to travel back and forth free each year: "it is quite a common thing. You just jump on board the boat when it is leaving and live with the crew while you are on board. Plenty of men do it". Star, 13 June, 1929. Not all got away with this - three Australian stowaways were charged the following year. Sun, 3 May, 1930.

semi-permanent jobs such as operating machines, stoking boilers, shovelling coal into gas retorts, and collecting and disposing of rubbish. Local bodies and the government began to employ permanent labouring staffs, reasonably fit individuals who could be counted on to turn up for work throughout the year rather than seeking variety and temporary high wages elsewhere. It was even more important for factories to be able to rely on their operatives. Even the latter's "semi-skills" required a period of training in order to reach optimum efficiency. The failure of any large number of them to turn up for work meant expensive machinery lying idle. Similarly, drunkenness at work might result in costly losses of materials and time, and damage to machines.

These factors also improved the bargaining power of this section of the labouring class and facilitated the growth of trade unions. However, a wide range of people, including less fortunate members of the same class, could take over their work during depressed economic times. This was evident during the tramway strike. There was therefore a strong emphasis on solidarity in their trade unionism and more than a hint of violence in their disputes. By coming out all together, by picketing, by threatening and, if necessary, by using violence, "scabs" could be discouraged and employers might be forced into a more favourable agreement. As a class, labourers were prone to physical violence and an industrial dispute gave this tendency some coherent direction.

By the 'twenties technological change was tending to pull the labouring class in opposite directions. On the one hand, new labour-saving machinery and methods were obviating the need for vast gangs of pick-and-shovel labourers with barrows

and drays, for stokers and for harvesters. On the other hand, they were increasing the demand for semi-skilled machinery operators and drivers. The unions of the labouring class such as general labourers', drivers' and tramway workers' gained strong memberships and severed as springboards for Labour politicians both locally and nationally. In Christchurch both E.H. Howard and H.T. Armstrong entered parliament by this route as did M. Howard, J. Mathison and R.M. Macfarlane in later years. Savage, Fraser and Semple also came to prominence through such labouring rather than skilled unions. Some, such as Fintan Patrick Walsh, were never able to shake off the reputation for violence.

However, just as their leaders gained in respectability, so those sections of the labouring class to secure steady jobs adopted many of the ways of the independent working class. In particular they were able to purchase homes on mortgage on the strength of their more stable incomes. The need to meet mortgage commitments was given by officials of the Tramways Employees' Union as the reason their members could not accept reductions in pay through rationing in 1931 and 1932.[152] In 1926 wage-earning drivers, tram conductors, motormen and even porters were earning on average £233 or more. Such incomes were at least as much, and usually more, than many independent working class individuals, including market-gardeners, cabinet-makers, stonemasons and watchmakers. This was regardless of whether the latter were on wages or working on their own account, and it included employers in the case of market-gardeners. Similarly, clerks employed in banks, insurance

152. The Secretary of the TEU claimed that "75% of the men were purchasing their homes". CTB, Works and Traffic Committee Minutes, 18 April, 1932.

companies, law practices and general office work had to uphold their dignity on average incomes lower than that of porters. In the light of this it is not surprising that one of the tramwaymen arrested during the 1932 dispute owned some acres of land on the edge of the city,[153] or that another ex-tramwayman was able to purchase a shop as a going concern when he was dismissed.[154]

Like technological change, the depression had mixed effects on the labouring class. Certainly the economic crisis brought severe shocks in the short-term. Labourers were disproportionately represented amongst the registered unemployed, and faced additional competition for much of their normal work from displaced members of other classes. Most fit men could become labourers when they could find nothing else. Similarly, the No. 4 Scheme and the Coates "Over the Fence" variation on the No. 5 Scheme led to much ordinary labouring work being done at relief rates of pay whereas skilled relief work retained some award protection. Even some labouring class men with previously secure jobs found themselves unemployed and consequently unable to maintain their mortgage commitments. This was exemplified by the retrenchment from the Railways Department of large numbers of Christchurch "permanent casuals" who had been in steady employment for many years.[155] The decisions of central and local governments not to augment their staffs also constricted the opportunities for labouring class youths to find secure employment.

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153. Press, 13 May, 1932.

154. Sun, 20 February, 1934. Several purchased commercial agencies, two a fish shop and one a sharemilking contract. Sun, 16 July, 1932.

155. Press, 4 April, 1, 8 July, 1930; Star, 12 December, 1931.

Nevertheless, the depression certainly did not reverse the trend already established by technological change and even appears to have reinforced it. This trend was to improve the standing of very large sections of the labouring class as against that of its nearest rival, the independent working class. Most of the unskilled and semi-skilled employees of local government, such as labourers and drivers, kept their jobs. Their ordinary pay was cut by only the general ten per cent in 1931, and in most cases at least half of this was restored by the middle of 1935. Consequently their real incomes had tended to increase since 1929, even allowing for cuts in overtime. Such local government jobs came to be eagerly sought, particularly in Christchurch city where no cuts in wages were made. Overall, the semi-skilled appear to have gained ground financially between 1925-26 and 1935, usually in real terms and almost invariably in comparison with independent working class occupations. For example, the incomes of motormen, tram conductors and locomotive engine-drivers fell by only nine, eight and seven per cent respectively. Those of linemen declined by under five per cent (although their numbers fell by over a fifth), locomotive firemen by eight per cent and postmen by eleven per cent. Even the incomes of railway surfacemen dropped by only twenty-one per cent, and their numbers increased by almost a tenth. The average incomes of motor drivers fell by thirty-five per cent, but there was a massive increase of fifty-seven per cent in their numbers. With a few exceptions, such as the new occupations of motor mechanic and electrician, skilled jobs whose incomes dropped by a comparable amount also showed large decreases in total number. Overall, income accruing to semi-skilled occupations, on the

basis of average income times number of those recorded in the occupation, fell by much less than that accruing to skilled occupations. It was more comparable to the situation in the white-collar class.

The section of the labouring class which showed a truly enormous loss of income over this period was that in which wage-earners gave their occupations as "labourer" or "farm labourer". This group contained a high proportion of the unemployed. The average income of labourers dropped from £176 to £81, or by over a half. Even this probably underestimated the fall for the average labourer as the total contained a large number of permanent employees of local bodies. The average income of farm labourers fell by only 44%, but from the extremely starting-point of £107. Once again, however, the later figure was almost certainly somewhat exaggerated respondents to the census were requested to include board and perquisites in their estimated income in 1936 but not in 1926.[156]

Despite these great falls in income, which could be attributed to technological change as well as the economic crisis, it could be argued that the depression advanced even this section of the labouring class. The misery which the crisis inflicted on people from "better" classes was a powerful spur for the provision of a much higher and more comprehensive safety net. In the process of coping with the depression's effects, the authorities provided the basis for a long-term improvement in the living standards, security and even the pride of a section of the population which would otherwise have

156. Census, 1926, vol.XI, p.1; 1936, vol.XII, p.i.

suffered increasing hardship due to technological change. The opinion of a number of social workers that some of the poor were better off in 1932 than they had been prior to the depression may well have been more than smug glibness.[157]

The depression certainly exacerbated tensions between classes. This was demonstrated most dramatically at the time of the tramways strike, when labourers and tramwaymen faced "specials" drawn, if not from "one class" as Mayor Sullivan suggested,[158] at least from classes to which they had an established antagonism. A heightened sense of class conflict can also be seen in the attacks of A.E. Armstrong on the city council's higher paid office staff.[159] The same antagonism towards the white-collar class is to be seen in the angry suggestions at the Addington Railway Workshops that office staff and not workers should be retrenched.[160] It was also present in the tramway dispute, with the TEU taking strong exception to the cuts in its members' incomes being greater than those of the board's salaried staff.[161] It was evident again for a short period at the end of 1935, when news of

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157. Sun, 21 July, 1934.

158. Times, 17 May, 1932.

159. Armstrong drew his heaviest personal support in 1935 from the "better" working-class areas. Over the whole city some 28% of voters gave him their support. This ranged from 11% in wealthy Heaton Street to 27% in labouring Leyden Street to 33% at Woolston and 34% in Madras Street North, both "respectable" working-class booths. Christchurch City Council, Town Clerk's Report, 1936.

160. A protest meeting of five hundred members of the New Zealand Railway Tradesmen's Association protested at 45 of their members being retrenched in 1930. They maintained that "clerical and non-productive" staff should go instead. Press, 27 June, 1930. The perspective of the class "below" the tradesmen is suggested by a protest from the Canterbury branch of the Locomotive Cleaners' Union when they opposed the creation of a single railway union. They argued that this would "stir up class hatred amongst the railway men themselves". Star-Sun 6 July, 1936.

161. Star, 2 May, 1932.

Labour's victory led large numbers of unemployed people - almost certainly members of the labouring class - to begin to issue threats and show insolence to the staff at the Labour Bureau.[162] Clearly for a moment they imagined that the "millennium" to which Labour leaders had often recently referred had actually arrived.[163] Evidently few had attended the WEA in order to be taught the proper meaning of freedom.

The shifts in power and importance between classes can only be traced in a very general way through the numbers employed in different categories of occupations in censuses of 1926 and 1936. This method is particularly unsuitable for the numerically small dominant classes. The use of the term "professional" in the census does not match with its definition in this thesis. Any attempt to count professionals therefore cannot take account, for example, of the increasing professionalisation of the civil service. However, the rise in the numbers of doctors and university staff is suggestive. The increase in the latter group is particularly significant. On the one hand, it indicates that the demand for professional training was increasing. On the other hand, it meant that more respected, and often very publicly active, professionals were being introduced into the upper ranks of society. Similarly, little can be inferred from the small increase in the proportion of actively employed men giving their occupational status as "employer" from 10.4% to 10.6%.[164]

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162. The officer in charge at the Labour Department sent an urgent telegram to Sullivan regarding the
> very embarassing time at the Employment Bureau, St Asaph Street, on account of certain extremists, who under the cloak of the Labour Party being elected to office, were using the most insulting and threatening language. P. Broad to Sullivan, Christchurch City Council, Outward Correspondence, 3 December, 1935.

163. Sun, 20 December, 1933.

164. Census, 1926, vol.IX, p.9; 1936, vol.X, p.iv.

Most such individuals would have fitted into the independent working class.

In that class there is a strong indication of decline. Despite the tendency of economic depression to encourage people to start their own businesses, the proportion of actively employed men working on their own account decreased from 13.5% to 12.7% between 1926 and 1936. Conversely, there are signs of the rise of white-collar employment. From 16.6% of the active male workforce in 1926, the proportion of wage and salary earners in commerce, finance, public administration and professional work increased to 17.8% in 1936. This represented a rise in the proportion of male salary and wage earners from 28% to 30.5%. Moreover, the rate of unemployment in these white-collar categories was only 8.4%, compared with 13.4% for all wage and salary earners.

The real revolutions in the relationships between classes had been developing for a long time before the depression, and owed most to changing technology. Within the ruling classes - the capitalists and the professionals - authority was shifting steadily towards the latter throughout the developed world. The value of professional knowledge and skills was becoming increasingly evident with the growing complexity of technology and social organisation. The Great War further emphasised their value. Within the British Empire, the failure of recovery in the 'twenties also contributed to a lack of confidence in capitalism. Large sections of the capitalist class itself turned to restrictive arrangements such as agreements to limit production and the use of tariffs. Increasingly they required governments and their professional advisers to help make and police such arrangements. The depression confirmed

this direction and spread the disillusionment with "pure" capitalism to the United States as well. In 1936 John Maynard Keynes provided a theoretical framework for the future "mixed" economy where business would be effectively directed by the state. Significantly, he had developed and to a large extent published the basic principles of his theory during the 'twenties. New Zealand showed a similar trend to the rest of the western world, partly because it absorbed so many of its ideas from overseas but largely because it shared the same experience of the limitations of capitalism and the promise of professionalism.

Two decisive shifts were taking place by the 'twenties within those clases which could be described as "ruled" rather than "ruling". On the one hand, the white-collar class was expanding rapidly in size, absorbing the children of other classes. On the other hand, there was a growing convergence between the independent, largely skilled, working class and a large and increasing section of the labouring class. Motor and electrical machinery was rendering many trades redundant while tending to de-skill others. This led much of the independent working class to find its accustomed security and superior incomes in white-collar or semi-skilled but steady employment. The less fortunate members of the labouring class, who remained working on a casual basis, were increasingly likely to be beneficiaries of a widening range of state benefits. The depression appears to have speeded up rather than reversed these changes in class relationships. It gave a new emphasis on the need to find "safe" jobs at a time when such jobs were to be found increasingly in white-collar or semi-skilled occupations and in large organisations, government

or business. The depression also gave much of the independent working class and the labouring class a new awareness of the advantages of having a government favourable to their interest, and a strong trade union movement. However, the economic crisis was in these ways only an acceleration of existing trends, a turbulent episode in a period of social change largely created by changing technology.

CONCLUSION

The impact of technological change on economic and social developments in New Zealand between the wars at least rivalled that of the depression. This is clear even when the period examined is limited largely to the depressed decade between 1926 and 1936, and the area concentrated upon is one unduly affected by the economic crisis. The development of the international collapse itself was strongly influenced by the manner in which much of the new technology benefitted the United States more than Britain, previously the guarantor of stability in world finance and trade.

Within New Zealand the new motor and electrical technology favoured the development of regions of the country outside Canterbury. Motor transport facilitated the continued growth of dairying and orcharding, forms of primary production unsuited to the province's climate. It also led to stagnation in the important local oat-growing and chaff-cutting industries. Simultaneously, the new electrical and motor industries tended to seek locations handy to the largest consumer markets, and these were now in the North Island. The harsh economic climate of the depression sharpened this trend and penalised a province heavily dependent on wool exports. Gold and government, two economic resources of particular value during the depression, were also concentrated elsewhere.

Similarly, while the very high levels of unemployment during the early 'thirties can be largely attributed to the

economic crisis, there was a strong undercurrent of technological unemployment. In agriculture, industry, transport and construction, unskilled labour was being rapidly displaced by electrical and motor machinery. The depression in effect served as a forcing-ground for measures which coped more humanely with this growing underlying problem. The provision of emergency relief work for unemployed men of many classes became gradually transmuted into regular unemployment and sickness benefits from the State.

Economic stringency caused by the depression restricted the recreational opportunities of many citizens. It led to some decline in attendance at spectator sports such as rugby and horse-racing, although some, notably trotting, showed a strong resistance to this trend. However, the influence of new technology on leisure-time activities was simultaneously taking interest away from the traditional sports. At the same time, there was continued growth in sports which increased private motor transport had nurtured during the 'twenties. These included tennis and golf. The trend to motoring holidays also proceeded during the early 'thirties although the depression and the rise in the real price of petrol kept the growth of private motor vehicle ownership down. Cinema attendances were swelled by the "talkie" boom from 1929 onwards and were only briefly affected by the depression - operators were soon forced to cut their prices to meet their competitors and make good their very substantial recent investments. They resumed planning capital spending on a large-scale as early as 1933. But the success of the cinema paled beside the rapid growth of radio listening.

which grew rapidly from 1931, both nationally and in the hard-hit province of Canterbury. Arguably, the depression may have slowed the decline in interest and involvement in older recreational activities, particularly by limiting the spread of motor transport.

Nevertheless, the economic deprivation and psychological pressure engendered by the crisis exacerbated a number of health problems. The rises in the incidence of mental illness, suicide, homicide and abortion are amongst the more dramatic of these problems, but some malnutrition, deterioration in dental health, and increases in goitre and peptic ulcer were very widespread. However, the harmful effects of the depression on health were disguised by other factors, including recent improvements in sanitation, water-supply and health education, and the long-term decline in the birth-rate which has been linked to industrialisation. There were also cross-currents from climatic influences, the direct impact of the Great War on the health of many New Zealanders and the shorter term decline in the birth-rate following the "baby boom" of the immediate post-war years. However, while the damage done by the depression was not immediately evident in the statistics of public health, the rise in mortality and morbidity from the disorders associated with affluence - heart disease and cancers - continued to be clearly displayed. In at least one area, that of motor accidents, the economic crisis actually appears to have alleviated a major public health problem which new technology had created. The decline in sickness due to heavy alcohol consumption can also be regarded as a positive by-product of the depression.

There were comparatively few casualties as a result of disorder during this period - it certainly did not impinge to any significant degree on the public health statistics. Even so, contrary to the traditional view, there was a degree of disorder in Christchurch during the depression, with the level of violence clearly exceeding that in Dunedin and being comparable to that in Wellington. Arguably the focus of unrest in Christchurch in May, 1932, the tramway dispute, threatened to provoke a much wider section of the community than just the unemployed. However, the forces of the state were never seriously challenged by outbreaks which occurred. Although the unemployed provided most of the baton-fodder during the strike, the dispute itself owed much to changes in technology, notably the inroads that motor transport was making into the revenue of the Tramways Board.

Local government had extensive responsibilities in the area of maintaining public order, notably in the issue of permits for meetings and marches. In Christchurch the Labour-dominated city council had ideological difficulty in banning such gatherings outright, and therefore faced continuing threats to order long after the trouble in other main centres had largely subsided. The Labour mayor, Dan Sullivan, was obliged to use a wide range of resources to head off dangerous situations. Throughout his years in office he worked hard to encourage the private charitable distribution of goods, partly as a means of forestalling outbreaks of anger from disappointed applicants and partly for humanitarian reasons. On the other hand, the Labour city council displayed a remarkably conservative attitude to its expenditure, including that on relief works. After a short initial period

of comparatively liberal spending in that area it returned to the parsimony which had become typical of Christchurch city councils. While stoutly maintaining old award rates, the council raised less new loan-money and attracted less in unemployment board funds than any of the other main cities. The reason for this conservatism lay primarily in the balance of classes in Christchurch. The Labour Party drew many of its leaders and a substantial element of its regular support from the independent working class, people who typically owned their own homes and sometimes their own businesses as well. They were therefore generally rate-payers and expected Labour to hold the rates down, as indeed the party promised. The failure of the city council to reduce rates to the satisfaction of many of those working people contributed materially to its defeat in 1935. At the same time, its attempts to hold down spending encouraged criticism from other elements and led to a further leakage of votes, particularly from the labouring class. The Labour council, like its conservative opponents, preferred to separate its responsibilities for the unemployed from those which had been swelled by technological change. For example, the vast profits from the sale of electricity were generally put into reserves on fixed deposit rather than being expended on unemployment relief. The council also found money for the expansion of its office staff and the purchase of large amounts of labour-saving machinery.

Despite its influence on the fortunes of the Labour party on the Christchurch City Council, the independent working-class was already facing a decline in its position vis-a-vis other classes due to changing technology. The depression merely served to confirm this decline. The same influence

was swelling the numbers and importance of the white-collar class even before the depression. The labouring class benefitted from the creation of many new semi-skilled jobs as a result of new technology. Less fortunate sections of the same class gained from the development of social security from attempts to provide relief work during the depression. Amongst the dominant classes, capitalists and professionals, the economic crisis merely reinforced the movement of authority away from the former and towards the latter, a movement which derived from the growing complexity of technology and the society it was shaping. Individual members of the professional class with little respect for capitalism enjoyed some authority prior to the end of 1935. However, the election of a Labour Government with a determination to assist working people gave such elements considerable scope for social engineering and a substantial increase in their self-confidence.

A study which concentrates deliberately on two particular influences inevitably tends to throw up others without pausing sufficiently to do justice to their importance. The impact of the Great War is one such, surfacing repeatedly in these pages alongside those of depression and technological change. Clearly its shadow would have been cast even more darkly had the years under close examination been extended back into the early 'twenties. Nevertheless, the influence of the war was strongly evident during the period between 1926 and 1936. It was to be seen in the unduly small number of men in their thirties and forties, and the large proportion of them

suffering from physical and psychological disabilities. It was also a powerful accelerant in the development of new technology and its wider application through mass production. Similarly, it had enhanced the standing of professionals and had broadened the general appreciation of the state's potential to shape the economy and society. A full examination of the influence of "the great watershed" of New Zealand between the wars would be rewarding.

It is impossible to study the period between the wars and fail to be struck by the similarities to contemporary developments. Once again there is high unemployment, special relief work schemes, large-scale government indebtedness in primary producing countries, and the resurgence of capitalist protest against "interference" by the state. More ominously, the world trading and financial system appears to have reached a situation reminiscent of that in the late 'twenties, with no single power being predominant enough to act as the final guarantor of stability. The most powerful nation in the system, the United States, is showing a strong tendency to safeguard and enhance its own position with little regard to the international consequences. So far this has been seen largely in the field of interest rates and foreign aid. The real danger may come if this attitude is extended to the handling of the large American trade deficit. Another Smoot-Hawley Tariff could lead to another collapse of international trade.

Again, there is the same coincidence of rapidly spreading technological change and an international economic crisis. The terms "second" and "third" industrial revolution are being applied to the adoption of new technologies in electronics and organic chemistry. The relationship between these factors

is complex. For example, the disproportionate application of electronic automation in Japan has undoubtedly helped to sustain that country's continuing high rate of growth. Similarly, the present high levels of unemployment almost certainly contain a substantial component due to changing technology. It is possible that this time there has been a much greater detrimental effect on the employment opportunities of white-collar workers. Already it seems possible that computer programmers may become the cruelly deceived victims of technological change in much the same manner as the hand-loom weavers of the late eighteenth century - encouraged by the one innovation only to be rendered redundant soon after by another.

As during the interwar period, large sections of the female population are moving into the paid workforce during depressed economic times. Then it was principally the unmarried who were moving out of the home to take up employment; and now it is the married. This may well be making the problem of economic and technological unemployment more difficult in the short-term.

Similarly, Christchurch has suffered disproportionately from the latest depression. For half a century, import controls, tariffs, increasing government spending and generally favourable trading conditions for primary exports engendered a climate in which the long-established industries of the city could continue to develop. With international prices and markets deteriorating and a determination on the part of government to make the economy more competitive, the basic problem of Canterbury industry has become evident again. To an even greater extent than in the 'thirties, the main consumer market is in the north of the North Island.

Furthermore, the booming new mineral and farm industries are generally far from this province. As yet there are few signs that Canterbury can benefit proportionately from the new emphasis on "resource-based industry".

On the other hand, there are important differences in the situations during the 'thirties and the 'eighties. A wide range of social security benefits is now available to those disadvantaged. Even after tax, the unemployment benefit for a single male is twice as large a proportion of the average weekly income as that of the assistance provided to comparable persons by the North Canterbury Hospital Board during the 'thirties. Then there was virtually no benefit at all for single unemployed women. When the unemployed are given special work they receive remuneration which is much closer to the average wage than that paid in return for relief work during the 'thirties.

However, the consumer society has continued to develop and its appeals have been given added power by television. Every night the unemployed can now be reminded of their comparative poverty in their own homes. Despite some job-sharing and renewed talk of creative leisure for the unemployed, it seems that in the 'eighties, as in the 'thirties', great numbers of people are trapped between increasing material expectations and the crueller realities of a world in crisis and change.

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APPENDIX A: PETROL PRICES, 1926-36

Date	First Grade	Second Grade	Source
27 February, 1926	1/9		Star
1 November, 1927	1/6	1/4	"
9 January, 1928	2/1		"
23 July, 1930	2/1	2/-	"
28 August, 1930	1/11	1/10	"
30 September, 1930	2/-	1/11	"
23 May, 1931	1/9		"
19 November, 1932	1/11	1/10	Sun
9 February, 1933	2/3		"
1 May, 1933	1/10		"
28 August, 1933	1/8	1/7	Star
24 November, 1933	1/9		Sun
23 December, 1933	1/9	1/9	Star
17 January, 1934	1/9	1/8	"
" " "	1/11	1/10	"
26 December, 1934	1/10		"
5 March, 1936	1/11	1/10	Star-Sun

APPENDIX B : RECOVERY IN NEW ZEALAND INDUSTRIES, 1931-34

The purpose of this table is to demonstrate that signs of recovery were evident - particularly in manufacturing - before devaluation. It is also intended to provide some more evidence that the change in the exchange rate may have set back that recovery in a number of largely urban-based industries. Each individual industry listed in the statistics of factory production gets at least one mention. But only one mention is made of industries where volume as well as value of output rose initially, or at a greater rate, in 1933-34. Volume is only used for major forms of production in the particular industry.

There was a small lag between the devaluation and the end of the 1932-33 year. However, given that that ten weeks was filled with pronouncements of doom from most sections of manufacturing it seems most likely that this period tended to drag down the 1932-33 totals.

(a) Cases where the value or volume of production increased in 1932-33 but fell in 1933-34.

	1931-32	1932-33	1933-34
Aerated-water and Cordial factories	100	102	97
Soap and Candle Making	100	105	100
Woollen-mills (lbs.of yarn)	100	152	149
Clothing Manufacture (trousers)	100	191	130

(b) Cases where a rise in the value or volume of production slowed in 1933-34.

	1931-32	1932-33	1933-34
Boiling-down and Manure Works	100	109	116
Cooperages and Packing-Case Factories	100	112	112
Electricity (value of sales)	100	103	103
Electricity (current sold)	100	116	121
Agricultural Implement and Dairying Machinery Manufacturing	100	118	121
Tanning	100	116	124
Boots and Shoes (numbers produced)	100	114	118
Hosiery (number of pairs)	100	143	144
Woollen Mills (yards of material)	100	120	124
Clothing Manufacture (suits)	100	133	151

(c) Cases where the rise in the value or volume of production continued in 1933-34 at roughly the same rate as 1932-33.

	1931-32	1932-33	1933-34
Boot and Shoe Manufacturing (value)	100	102	105
Woollen mills (value)	100	111	122
Hosiery factories (value)	100	105	111
Clothing Manufacture (value)	100	111	122
Flax-milling	100	164	224

(d) Cases where an existing rise in the value or volume of production accelerated in 1933-34.

	1931-32	1932-33	1933-34
Meat Freezing and Preserving	100	108	128
Woolscouring and Fellmongering	100	121	245
Rough-sawn Timber (volume)	100	108	128

(e) Cases where the decline in value or volume of production continued in 1933-34.

	1931-32	1932-33	1933-34
Fish Curing and Preserving	100	67	60
Ice-cream Making	100	99	86
Fruit-preserving and Jam-making	100	91	84
Sauce, Pickle and Vinegar Making	100	95	94
Gasworks (value of sales)	100	95	93
Gasworks (volume of gas)	100	97	94
Furniture and Cabinet Making	100	84	71

(f) Cases where the rise in value of production began in 1933-34.

	1931-32	1032-33	1933-34
Ham and Bacon Curing	100	92	99
Butter, Cheese and Condensed-milk factories	100	96	108
Grain-mills	100	88	89
Biscuit, confectionery and sugar-boiling works	100	94	104
Breweries and Malthouses	100	92	93

Resawing and Planing Mills	100	99	110
Other Sawmilling and Sash and Door Manufacturing	100	98	116
Lime Crushing or Burning and Cement-making	100	80	93
Brick, Tile and Pottery Works	100	71	88
Iron and Brass Foundries	100	92	108
Engineering - works	100	84	91
Printing Establishments	100	92	93
Coachbuilding and Motor and Cycle Engineering	100	94	97

APPENDIX C: CHRISTCHURCH CITY COUNCIL TRAFFIC CENSUSES, 1915-36.

	1915	1922	1926	1929	1932	1936
Bicycles	7778	8014	8843	9526	12259	11355
Trams	580	672	895	872	834	763
Taxis	221	255	242	214	339	446
Cars	297	932	1848	2184	2753	3450
Motor-cycles	503	384	476	405	567	320
Light vans	200	232	330	341	587	565
Heavy vans	96	71	218	53	136	366
Horse and Trade Carts	443	339	326	252	128	57

Source: Christchurch City Council, Chief Traffic Inspector's Report, 1932, p.13; 1936, p.22.

Each "census" was taken at the same stations between 8 a.m. and 5.30 p.m. on a February weekday. However, the 1929 figures for taxis, motor-cycles, and vans appear aberrant. There also seems to be some confusion between light and heavy vans.

APPENDIX D : VOTING PATTERNS IN MAYORAL ELECTIONS

	1927		1929		1931		1935	
	(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)
Wealthy/Commercial/Professional								
Knox Church (north-west)	27	206	14	-40	-8	-41	3	10
Merivale Lane (north-west)	12	233	15	-48	3	2	19	19
Rugby Street (north-west)	17	212	19	-24	-10	-31	9	42
Art Gallery (central-west)	20	169	-19	-48	-50	-44	22	14
Orange Hall (central-east)	67	253	-46	-67	-47	-42	52	28
Middling								
St. Albans Library	22	136	16	-27	-21	-15	-39	-39
Spreydon Chambers	14	71	27	-27	0	27	22	3
Woodham Road	46	205	0	-18	26	26	-42	-57
St. Martins Library	28	126	-3	-22	7	8	1	-16
Cranford Street	32	141	20	-11	6	-2	-1	-9
Low income								
Lawson Street	32	93	-15	-32	0	13	-12	-20
Salvation Army Hall	47	99	-11	-21	-14	-14	46	40
Aldwins Road	26	77	-28	-40	3	12	-69	-73
Falsgrave Street	68	121	-26	-38	25	34	-28	-29
St. Chads Hall	28	72	33	-1	32	35	27	28

(a) percentage movement in total vote
(b) percentage movement in Labour vote

Source: Press, 30 April, 1925; 28 April, 1927; 3 May, 1929; 7 May, 1931; 9 May, 1935.

APPENDIX D : (Continued)

A crude method of determining the "swing" for or against Labour is to calculate the difference between the increase in the total vote and that for Labour. Thus the wrath of the North-west in 1929 is shown in a 54 "spread" at Knox and 63 at Merivale. The change was rather less at the central city booths and at most of the "middling" ones. There was little spread in the low income areas, but overall a marked fall in the total vote. Labour counted on building up large majorities in such areas in order to carry the city.

The 1933 election has been excluded because of the one-sided nature of the mayoral contest, with no official or recognised Citizens' Association candidate.

The introduction of new neighbouring booths results in sharp falls in total votes, particularly in 1935 when the city's administrators clearly took note of the very large increase in enrolments. However, the "heartland" of each booth's catchment tends to remain the same and the spread between the movement in the Labour and total votes often retains some value.